

Stories from the Indian Classics

selected and retold by
V S Naravane



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*Dedicated Gratefully
to the Memory of*

Professor Amaranatha Jha

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Preface

INDIA is the original home of fiction

It was fiction, rather than poetry or drama, which first put India on the literary map of the world. Centuries before Kalidasa and Valmiki were heard of outside India, stories of Indian origin were told and retold in distant corners of Asia and Europe. They were picked up by the Persians and the Arabs, who passed them on to the Turks. From the markets of Constantinople this precious, though invisible, merchandise was forwarded to Venice and Naples. Many a tale in the *Decameron* owes its central idea to some episode in the *Jatakas* or the *Kathasaritsagara*. From Boccaccio to Chaucer, from Chaucer to Cervantes and Shakespeare, right down to Le Sage, La Fontaine and Voltaire—what a wonderful journey in time and space!

Ancient Indian fiction offers a diversity of theme, atmosphere and situation unequalled in world literature. Some of the stories are saturated with the spirit of piety and religious devotion, others reveal a refreshingly secular and objective attitude to life. Some are products of pure fancy, and show an insatiable love of invention for its own sake, others are realistic, and their shrewd practicalism provides a healthy corrective to the mystical excesses of the Indian consciousness. Some are profound, weighty, deep, others compensate by their vigour, their uninhibited freedom. Some are soft and delicate like the pulp of ripe pears, others are sharp like pineapples—their texture is far from tender, but the flavour is full-bodied.

As we read these tales from ancient India, we are struck by the amazing continuity of Indian life and culture across the centuries. They show us how little India has changed in spite of mighty political upheavals, the rise and fall of empires, the mingling of races, the clash of sects and religions. In ancient times India was as much a land of contrasts as it is today—wealth and want, grandeur and simplicity, transparent sincerity and unashamed chicanery, saintliness and cynicism, refinement and crudeness.

The men and women who emerge from these stories are intensely real to us. There is the pure-minded sage, the detached philosopher, the distraught poet, the self-effacing reformer, the restless wanderer. There is the blushing bride, the tireless housewife, the miserable widow. There is the credulous peasant, the voluble astrologer, the rapacious priest, the pompous grandee, the servile courtier, the pedantic scholar. It would appear that a thousand years ago the Indian barber was as garrulous as he is now, and it is very much to be feared that then, as now, the grocer's weights were not always accurate.

In the pages that follow I invite readers to join a series of expeditions into this exciting realm of fact and fancy. We cannot hope to explore more than a small portion of this vast continent. But we shall assuredly climb a few imposing peaks, step into some fertile valleys, tramp the lanes of a few populous cities and sail upon a number of interesting rivers. Now and again we might drift into regions where the path is rugged, the air oppressive and the water unpalatable. But these will be followed by healthier climes where the breeze will allay our fatigue and the fragrance of flowers will soothe our nerves.

From some of these excursions we shall return wiser, though a trifle sadder. Others will bring us unmixed delight. But whatever the outcome, I feel sure that the journeying itself will not be tiresome.

V S NARAVANE

Allahabad,
March 15, 1962

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The Jatakas

THE Jataka stories ostensibly deal with episodes from the previous births of the Buddha. Very often, however, the Bodhisattva is a minor participant, or even a mere onlooker. He sometimes appears as a prince, a merchant or a minister, but we often see him in much humbler roles—as a gardener, a musician, or a teacher. In a number of Jatakas, the Bodhisattva is born an animal—he is an elephant, a lion—or some bird. By this device, the story-teller is enabled not only to draw a moral with an immediate import, but also to utilize an unlimited storehouse of themes and situations. He can cast his net as wide as he pleases, introducing the Bodhisattva at an appropriate moment and thus accommodating pre-Buddhist motifs within the traditional Buddhist framework of his story.

The earliest of these stories go back to the third century B.C. This is clearly proved by the carvings on the stupa at Bharhut, in which a number of episodes taken from well-known Jatakas are depicted. The Pali works in which Jatakas appear are Nidanakatha, Charivapitaka and Kutadantasutta. Among the Sanskrit works containing the Jataka stories, the most important are Avadanashataka, Divyavadanasutra

and the Jatakamala of Aryastura

The Jataka stories are a flavor that is utterly unique. This flavor, this peculiar aroma, does not reside in any particular quality or group of qualities. It arises from a subtle fusion of atmosphere, context, mannerisms and purpose. It can be savoured, but it can never be defined. These stories are simple and eloquent, persuasive and profound. Steeped in sincerity and moral earnestness, they often startle us by the most brilliant speculations of the human mind. In some of them, exaggeration is raised to the level of a fine art. Others are gems of understatement.

The aim is avowedly didactic. But this does not mean that the Jatakas are exclusively preoccupied with grave issues of right and wrong. They include simple tales in which some ordinary problem of daily life is taken up or some personal failing is gently and wisely pointed out. We are warned against talkativeness; we are made to realise the futility of empty disputes; the danger of trusting foolish friends is effectively brought home to us; we are asked not to meddle in other people's business. And all this is done without boring us.

Even in those Jatakas which are concerned with the deepest problems of life there is no conscious striving after effect. They are free from pedantry and scholasticism. The aesthetic effect is achieved through directness and the naturalness of purpose rather than literary embellishments.

Their appeal is ageless and they show how good art can combine the utmost in simplicity with the utmost in directness.

The Test of Goodness

ONCE upon a time the Bodhisattva was born as Brahma-datta, the prince of Banaras. He grew up into a fine lad and at the age of sixteen went to the University at Takshashila where he mastered all the branches of learning. On his father's death he mounted the throne and became the king of Banaras. He ruled with rectitude and wisdom. He was upright and just. And he never allowed his whims to influence the administration.

As the master, so the assistants. Following the King's example the ministers also acted justly. After a while everything at Banaras was justly done. No one brought a false suit in the court. The palace was free from the bustle of complainants. The ministers sat all day long with nothing to do and went back without seeing a single suitor. All the courts were deserted.

At last a day came when the Bodhisattva felt disturbed and thought 'How quiet is everything! No one comes to try any issue in the court. My government is accepted as perfectly just. And yet there must be *some* faults in me, even if injustice is not one of them. I must find out what my faults are, so that I may overcome them and lead a better life.'

And so Brahmadata tried to find someone who would tell him his defects. But, although he talked to every single person at the court, he could hear nothing but praise of himself. Suspecting that people spoke well of him only out of fear, he went about and spoke to people outside

the palace. But he got the same answer. Then he spoke to the citizens at large, but was still unable to hear of his faults. He wandered as far as the four city gates and talked to people in the suburbs. But even in the suburbs, no one had anything but praise for the king.

Finally, determined to find a man who would reveal his faults, the Bodhisattva entrusted his government to the care of ministers and left the city in disguise taking only his driver with him. He traversed the countryside far and wide right up to the frontier. Then he turned homewards by the high road.

Now, by a unique coincidence, Mallika, the king of Kosala, was at that time wandering about for exactly the same purpose. He, too, was a just sovereign, and wanted to know his own faults. Hearing nothing but praise, he too had wandered far and wide in search of a person who would point out his limitations.

The two kings chanced to meet at a place where the road was narrow and there was no room for one carriage to overtake the other. Clearly, it was necessary that one party should give right of way to the other.

Mallika's driver addressed the driver of the king of Banaras and asked him to remove his carriage. But the Bodhisattva's driver would not agree to this. "No, no, my friend", said he, "it is you who must make way for us. You must know that in this carriage sits Brahmadatta, the great monarch of Banaras."

"And you must know, driver", replied the other, "that in my carriage sits the great King Mallika, lord of the realm of Kosala. Please take your carriage to one side and give us passage."

The driver of the king of Banaras was now perplexed. He did not know how to determine the priority between the two kings. It occurred to him that the younger should make way for the elder. But when he enquired of King Mallika's age it was discovered that the two kings had been born on the same day. The driver then made enquiries about Mallika's power, resources, fame, and also con-

cerning his caste, clan and family To his utter surprise he found that on every one of these points the two kings were equals At last Brahmadata's driver came to the conclusion that there was only one method of determining the right of passage—he who was the nobler man of the two should have priority So he requested the other driver to describe his master's virtues King Mallika's driver proudly recited this verse

Great King Mallika is rough to the rough,
But to the gentle he returns gentleness
The good he conquers by greater goodness,
And badness bestows on those that are bad
Such are the ways of the king of Kosala,
Give place, oh driver, give place

Hearing this, the driver of the king of Banaras exclaimed: "Is that all you have to say about your king's nobility? If these are his virtues, what may his faults be?" The other man said, "Call them faults, or call them anything else But let us now hear the virtues of *your* king" "Certainly", rejoined the first, and he recited a stanza

By mildness alone he conquers anger,
By goodness he repays the bad
By lavish gifts he vanquishes misers,
And falsehood he overcomes with truth
Such are the virtues of the king of Banaras,
Make way, oh driver, make way

King Mallika and his driver were deeply impressed by these words They realised that he who returns mildness for harshness is superior to him who is rough to the rough and mild to the mild, that to repay evil by good and falsehood by truth proclaims true nobility And so they descended from their carriage, loosed the horses, and moved them out of the way so as to make room for the king of Banaras

The Bodhisattva gave good advice to King Mallika and instructed him in the ways of righteousness. Then he returned to Banaras and spent his life in deeds of kindness and charity until at last he joined the hosts of heaven.

King Mallika took the lesson to heart. After traversing the length and breadth of the land, he returned to his own city.

And he too gave alms throughout his life, and did many other things that were good, until he attained to heaven.

RAJOVADA JATAKA

The Gift of the Eyes

ONCE, in ancient times, the Bodhisattva was born as a prince in the kingdom of Arutthapura. His name was Sivi. When he grew up, he went to Takshashila and studied the sciences and the arts. After completing his education he returned and proved his knowledge to his father, the king, who immediately made him a viceroy. When his father died, Sivi became king. He practised the Ten Royal Virtues and ruled in righteousness. He caused six halls to be built in the middle of the city where he distributed alms every day. By and by the generosity of King Sivi came to be known far and wide.

Once, on the day of the full moon, King Sivi sat thinking of the gifts that he had made. Although he had been so generous he was not satisfied. He thought to himself: 'There is nothing among external objects that I have not given away. But this kind of charity does not content me. I crave to give something that is part of myself. Today when I go to the alms-hall, if anyone were to ask for a part of my body I shall give it to him. If he asks for my blood, I shall fill a bowl with my blood and hand it over. If he mentions my very heart, I shall cut my breast with a spear and pull out my heart. If someone were to ask for my

services I shall cast off my royal dress and, proclaiming myself to be a slave, go to the man's house and do the work he commands. Indeed, should anyone demand my eyes I would take them out and give them away. Only this kind of giving away will satisfy me.'

Having made this resolution King Sivi bathed himself with sixteen jars of scented water, put on magnificent clothes, refreshed himself with choice food, and went to the alms-hall on a richly caparisoned elephant.

Meanwhile Indra, the king of the Gods, had read his thoughts. He wondered whether the king would really be able to make such a gift. Indra made up his mind to test King Sivi's resolution. He assumed the form of a Brahmin, blind and bent with age. When the king approached the alms-hall, Indra stretched out his hands and said, "Long live the king!" The king directed his elephant towards the blind man and said, "What is it you want, Brahmin?" Indra said, "Oh mighty King! In all the inhabited world there is no region which does not echo with the fame of your bounty. But I am blind, while you have two eyes. I am an old man and I have come from a long distance. Give me one of your eyes, I beg of you, so that each of us may have one eye and none of us may be deprived of sight."

When the Bodhisattva heard this he mused 'What a coincidence! That is just what I was thinking a little while ago. Today my heart's desire shall be fulfilled. I shall make a gift such as no other man has ever made.' And so, turning to the old man, King Sivi said, "My friend, the wish that has brought you from such a long distance shall be granted. Here, take my eyes. You requested me to give you one. Behold, I give you two. Go with good sight and let all the people here see that your desire has been fulfilled."

The king, however, did not wish to have his eyes removed in the presence of the multitude. So he took the Brahmin to the palace with him, sat on his throne, and sent for his surgeon, Sivaka.

The news spread throughout the city. The Commander-in-Chief, other officials, and all those who loved the king gathered together. They tried to turn King Sivi from his purpose, saying, "Oh, don't give away your eyes, Lord! Don't desert us, Oh King! Give money and pearls and as many precious things as you please. Give costly horses, fine chariots and elephants decked with cloth of gold. We, your faithful people, want to preserve you safe and sound. Do not deprive yourself of sight."

But the king was firm. He said, "The man who, having vowed to make a gift, is unfaithful to his own vow, puts his neck into a snare. He commits a sin and dooms himself to enter the house of Yama. I am giving only what was asked of me. I have made up my mind. That which the Brahmin wants shall be given to him on the spot."

"But what can be your desire in making such a gift?", the courtiers persisted. "What is the prize you are aiming at—life, beauty, joy or strength?"

King Sivi answered, "In making this gift, glory is not my goal. I do not desire sons, or power over many kingdoms. I am simply following the good old way of all holy men. The fact is that my soul is enamoured of bestowing gifts."

When the Great Being uttered these words the courtiers kept silent. Addressing Sivaka, the surgeon, the King said, "Sivaka, you are a friend and comrade. Now do as I tell you. Take out my eyes, I know you have skill enough. Take them out and put them in the Brahmin's hands." The surgeon said, "Think well, Your Majesty. It is not a small matter to give away one's eyes." At this the King rejoined, "Sivaka, don't waste time, nor talk too much in my presence. I have considered everything."

Sivaka thought that it was unworthy of a skilful surgeon to pierce a king's eye with his lancet. So he pounded a number of herbs, rubbed a blue lotus with the powder, and brushed the King's right eye with the lotus. The eye rolled round, and there was great pain. "Reflect, Oh King", said Sivaka, "I can still make it all right." But the king hurried him and asked him to go on. Then the surgeon

smear the eye with a sharper powder. The eye came out of the socket. The king's garments were stained with blood and his pain was extreme. The women and the courtiers fell at his feet weeping loudly, and cried, "Lord, don't sacrifice your eyes." And Sivaka repeated, "Your Majesty, I can still restore the eye if you so desire." But the king said, "Be quick, my friend." Then the surgeon grasped the eyeball with his left hand, took a knife in his right, and severed the tendon. When the eye came off, the surgeon put it in the Bodhisattva's hand.

The king gazed with his left eye upon the right one which was now in his hand and, enduring great pain, asked the Brahmin to approach. When the Brahmin came close, the king gave him the eye and said, "The eye of knowledge is a thousand times dearer to me than this. Take it." The Brahmin took the eye and put it in his own socket, where it remained fixed like a blue lotus in bloom. When the king saw this with his left eye he cried, "Ah, how good it is to make the gift of an eye." And, full of joy, he asked the surgeon to remove his other eye as well. Indra took this one too, and put it in his other socket. Then he departed from the palace and left the city, with the gaze of the multitude upon him.

King Sivi remained in the palace for a few days. Then he thought, 'What has a blind man to do with kingship? I should hand over my kingdom to the courtiers, retire into a hermitage, and live as an ascetic.' So he summoned his counsellors and said, "Let one man come with me. He will wash my face and help me in other ways. And let a cord be fastened to guide me to the retiring places." Then he called for a chariot and got ready to depart. But the courtiers did not allow him to go in a chariot. They put him gently in a golden litter, carried him into a park, and set him down by the side of a lake. Then they returned to the capital with heavy hearts, while the king sat thinking of the gift he had made.

At that moment Indra's throne became hot. Indra pondered and understood that King Sivi's amazing genero-

sity was the cause of the heat So he came down to earth, approached the Great Being, and walked up and down near him a number of times "Who is that ?", cried King Sivi when he heard the foot-steps Indra said, "I am the king of the Gods I have come to visit you, Oh Royal Sage Choose a boon Whatever you desire shall be granted "

The king replied, "Oh Indra, I have left behind me wealth, strength, and treasure beyond compare Now I want nothing but death, for I am blind "

"Do you ask for death, King Sivi, because you really wish to die, or only because you are blind ?"

"Because I am blind, my Lord "

At this Indra, desiring to test him further, said, "Oh King, the gift is not everything in itself It was made with a view to the future One eye was asked of you, but you gave two What was your purpose ? Declare the truth, and your eyes shall be restored to you "

On hearing this the Bodhisattva firmly replied, "Indra, if you wish to give me an eye do not try all these means Let my eye be restored as a consequence of my gift " Indra was satisfied and said, "Though I am the king of the Gods I do not have the power of giving an eye to anyone else By the fruit of your gift shall your eye be restored, and by nothing else "

King Sivi asserted that his gift was well given He said, "Whoever came to ask anything of me has been dear to my heart If these solemn words of mine be true let my eyes reappear " And as he uttered these words, the king's eyes grew in his sockets again

These new eyes that the king had gained were neither natural nor divine Eyes given by Indra cannot be natural On the other hand, a divine eye cannot be produced in anything that is injured These eyes that the king had secured were of a different class altogether They were eyes of the Attainment of Truth When they came into existence, the entire retinue of Indra's palace assembled Indra stood in the midst of the throng and praised the king Then he declared that with his new eyes the

king would be able to see upto a distance of hundred leagues on every side , nor would any obstruction bar his vision He would see through rock and wall, hill and dale And then Indra returned to the world of the Gods

The Great Being went back to the city and entered his palace The news that he had got back his eyes spread throughout the kingdom People gathered from far and near to see him, and they brought gifts for their sovereign The king caused a great pavilion to be set up at the palace gate, and there he seated himself upon his royal throne, while a white umbrella was raised above him Then it was announced by beat of drum that members of all the guilds were to assemble there without delay When the people had come together the king preached the law of righteousness and said, "Listen, my subjects Let no one deny anything that is asked of him, even if it be the best and choicest thing in his possession Come close, and see the eyes that I have received as the fruit of my gift These eyes can see for a hundred leagues on every side, whatever the obstruction In all mortal beings the finest treasure is self-sacrifice I sacrificed perishable eyes, and received the Eye of Knowledge in return Be generous, my people Never eat a meal without giving away something , let others have a share "

The Great Being continued to preach the law once in every fifteen days The people, hearing him and taking his lessons to heart, gave alms and occupied themselves in good deeds until they attained to heaven

SIVI JATAKA

The Culprit Discovered

ONCE upon a time the Bodhisattva was born in Banaras and, having perfected his education, became one of the king's ministers

One day the women of the palace went to the royal tank for a bath. They removed the jewels and laid them aside, along with their upper garments, in boxes which were placed in the charge of servants. Then they entered the tank and splashed about in the cool water. Now, while the queen was taking off her pearls and ornaments she was watched by a female monkey hidden in the branches of a tree nearby. As soon as she saw the queen's pearl necklace the monkey conceived a longing to wear it. She waited for a chance to get at the necklace, but for a long time the servant girl in charge of the box was very watchful. By and by, however, she became weary and began to nod. The monkey saw her opportunity. Quick as the wind she jumped down, put the pearls round her own neck, and quick as the wind she was up among the branches again. Then, fearing that other monkeys might discover her treasure, she concealed the string of pearls in a hole in the tree, and she stood guard over her spoil with demure eyes as if nothing had happened.

As soon as the servant woke up she discovered that the necklace was gone. In sheer panic she screamed, "Help, help! A man has run away with the queen's pearl necklace." The guards came running from every direction, heard her story, and conveyed the news to the king. "Catch the thief at once", said the king in great anger. The guards went searching high and low. They looked for the thief at every corner of the vast park in which the tank was situated.

Now, as it happened, a simple villager was passing that way at the time. Not used to so much excitement and noise, the poor man got alarmed and took to his heels. Catching sight of the runner the guards cried, "There he goes. That's the thief we want." And, pursuing him with great vigour, they caught him without much difficulty. They gave him many blows and accused him of stealing the queen's necklace.

The villager thought that if he denied the charge he would be beaten to death by the king's men. So he pleaded

guilty and was hauled off as a prisoner. The king questioned him closely, and asked him what he had done with the jewels. The rustic said, "Your Majesty, I am a poor man. I have never in my life owned anything of value. What shall I do with pearls? It was the Treasurer who made me take the necklace. I stole it and gave it to him. He knows all about it."

The king sent for the Treasurer and asked whether the villager had passed the necklace on to him. The Treasurer was also frightened at the prospect of being beaten and tortured. So he confessed that he had received the necklace but declared that he had given it away to the High Priest. The High Priest was sent for and interrogated in the same way. He said he had given it to the Chief Musician, and the musician in his turn said that he had presented it to a courtesan. But when the courtesan was brought before the king she denied all knowledge of the necklace.

By the time all these people had been questioned it became very dark. The king said, "It is too late now. We shall look into this matter tomorrow." So he handed over the five prisoners to his ministers and went back to the palace. The Bodhisattva, who was the wisest among the ministers, pondered deeply over the incidents that had occurred. 'There is something wrong somewhere', thought he. 'The jewels were lost near the tank, while the villager was far away. There was a strong guard at the gates, and it was impossible for any one to get away with the necklace. I cannot see how any human being could have secured it. This wretched fellow roped in the Treasurer merely to save his own skin, and the Treasurer must have thought that he would get out of the trouble if the High Priest also were to be involved in the business. The High Priest must have accused the Chief Musician in the hope that the latter's company would make his imprisonment endurable. And the Chief Musician must have implicated the courtesan for the same reason. I think none of these five has anything to do with the theft. On the other hand, monkeys swarm all over the park and one of them—perhaps a female—

must have taken a fancy to the necklace ' "

Having arrived at this conclusion, the Bodhisattva went to the king and requested that the suspects might be handed over to him so that he might examine the matter personally. The king had great confidence in him. So he said, "By all means, my wise friend. Examine them in whatever manner you please."

Then the Bodhisattva sent for his trusted assistants and told them where to lodge the five prisoners. "Keep a strict watch over them", he said. "Listen to everything they say, and report every word to me." The assistants did as they were told. When the prisoners were left to themselves the Treasurer turned to the rustic and said, "You wretch, have you and I ever met before today? How dare you say that you gave me the necklace!" "Sir", said the other, "I have never possessed anything of greater value than a broken stool. I thought that with your help I could get out of this trouble. That is why I said that I stole the necklace at your command. Please do not be angry with me." The High Priest in his turn said to the Treasurer, "And how could you pass on to *me* something that you had never received?" The Treasurer replied, "I only said so because I thought that if two high officers of state like you and me were to stand together both of us would escape." The Chief Musician said to the High Priest, "You crooked Brahmin! When, pray, did you give the pearls to me?" "Calm yourself", said the High Priest, "don't you see that I said so only because I find your company agreeable." Finally the courtesan shouted, "You wretch of a musician, you know very well that I never visited you, nor did you ever visit me. When could you have given me the necklace?" "Now, now, don't be angry, my dear", said the musician "after all, the five of us have to keep house together for a while. Let us be happy and put a cheerful face upon the business."

Thus conversation was duly reported to the Bodhisattva. Having confirmed his belief that all the five were innocent, the Bodhisattva proceeded to secure the necklace from the

monkey He had a number of monkeys caught and put strings of coloured beads on their necks and wrists Then the monkeys were turned loose again They strutted about in their new splendour and jumped from branch to branch When they came to the she-monkey who sat guarding her treasure, they flaunted their finery Jealousy overcoming her prudence, the she-monkey exclaimed, "You are wearing only beads, you fools Just see what I have got " And she brought out her necklace of real pearls and put it on

This was at once seen by the watchers whom the Bodhisattva had posted under the tree They promptly threatened the she-monkey and made her drop the necklace It was brought to the Bodhisattva who presented it to the King and said, "Your Majesty, here is the stolen necklace The five persons are innocent A female monkey in the park was the real thief " "How did you find that out ?", asked the king in surprise, "and how did you manage to get possession of it again ?" The Bodhisattva told the whole story, and the king thanked him, saying, "You are the right man in the right place " And he further praised the Bodhisattva by reciting this stanza

In war we need a hero's courage,
And for counsel a wise man's calm ,
For pleasure we seek out boon companions,
Judgment alone we seek in plight

After thus expressing his praise and gratitude, the king showered treasures upon the Bodhisattva like a storm-cloud pouring rain from the heavens He followed the Bodhisattva's advice through a long life spent in charity And then the king passed away to fare according to his deserts

The Six-tusked Elephant

IN one of his former lives, the Bodhisattva was born as the son of an elephant-king. He grew up into a marvellous elephant, ivory-white in complexion, with red feet and pink face. He had a trunk that shone like a rope of silver, and his well-rounded tusks emitted rays of six colours. By and by he mastered all the arts of his tribe and, on his father's death, became the monarch of that mighty herd of eight thousand elephants.

The name of this noble king was Chhaddanta. He loved his subjects and looked to all their needs. He paid honour to the buddhas and never hurt anybody. With peace and contentment Chhaddanta passed his days in the company of his two queens, Cullasubhadda and Mahasubhadda.

The home of this herd of elephants was a golden cave by the side of an immense lake in the Himalayas. In the whole wide world there was no other lake so beautiful as this. Its middle portion, covering a distance of twelve leagues in length and width, was entirely free from weeds and roots. Here the water shone like a magic jewel. Next to this area, and encircling it on all sides, there was a thicket of blue lotuses, and this, in turn, was surrounded by patches of red and white lotuses. Finally all these rings of lotuses, with the sheet of crystal-clear water in the middle, were cordoned by a vast tangle of multi-coloured lilies.

Near the shores of the lake, in water just deep enough for elephants to stand in, red paddy grew in abundance. At the edge of the water there were clusters of small shrubs abounding in delicate and fragrant blossoms—blue, yellow, white and red. Cucumbers, pumpkins, gourds and kidney-beans grew all around. There were fields of luscious sugarcane and groves of bananas that yielded fruits the size of an elephant-tusk. There were trees, big and small—tamarind, custard-apple and *sal*, interspersed with thickets of golden bamboos.

This delightful home of the elephants was surrounded

by seven mountains The smallest of these, the Little Black Mountain, was a league in height The tallest, the Golden Mountain, was seven leagues high It rose above the lake like the rim of a bowl Its inner side was of the colour of beaten gold The light reflected from it made the lake look like the newly-risen sun

On the eastern side of the lake, at a spot where cool breezes blew, there was a huge banyan tree It stood forth in all its beauty, with its eight thousand branches affording peace and shade In the hot season, Chhaddanta, the elephant-king, loved to slumber under the great banyan tree, welcoming the gentle breeze as it skimmed the surface of the lake In the rainy season he lived in the golden cave to the west of the lake

One day someone told Chhaddanta that a grove of *sal* trees was in full bloom and looked very beautiful So he went to the grove, attended by his queens, and enjoyed the sight of the trees bursting with flowers While he was moving about in the *sal* forest Chhaddanta happened to strike with his forehead one of the mighty trees Now on one side of the tree stood Mahasubhadda, and the branches on that side showered upon her head choice blossoms and soft leaves when Chhaddanta struck the tree On the other side stood Cullasubhadda, and unfortunately only dry twigs fell on her at the same moment On some of the dry twigs red ants were crawling, and these, too, fell on the queen's head

A wave of jealousy swept through Cullasubhadda's heart She thought 'So, that's how it is! On the wife dear to him he lets fall flowers and pollen, but on my person he drops twigs and red ants Well, I shall not forget' And from that moment she harboured a grudge against Chhaddanta

A few days later the king and his queens went to have a ceremonial bath in the lake Two young elephants anointed the king and rubbed him down with lotus-shoots, then they splashed him with cool water After him the queen elephants bathed and stood by the side of Chhaddanta.

Now, as it happened, a certain elephant found, in the lake, a magnificent lotus with seven shoots. With great affection he offered the flower to the king who, in his turn, passed it on to Mahasubhadda, who was nearer to him than the other queen. At this Cullasubhadda became exceedingly angry and swore vengeance against her lord.

The jealous queen gave up food and water. She pined away in misery and, in a few days, she died. She was reborn in the royal family of Madda, as a daughter of the queen-consort. The king and queen of Madda brought her up with great affection and, when she was of suitable age, married her to the king of Banaras. Her beauty captivated her husband and she became his chief queen with authority over all his other wives. Her name in her new birth was Subhadda.

Remembering all the events of her previous birth, Queen Subhadda thought, 'Ah, now is the time to revenge myself upon Chhaddanta. I shall send hunters to cut off his tusks and humiliate him. Am I not the Chief Queen of the mighty king of Banaras?' And so one day, at the hour when the king visited her, she put on a soiled robe and lay in bed pretending to be sick.

The king entered the chamber and, with great solicitude, asked her what was amiss. "Oh peerless one", he said, "why are you pale? What grief weighs upon your mind? Why do you look faded, like a wreath trampled underfoot?" Subhadda heaved a sigh and said, "Alas, it is all the result of an unsatisfied longing. But it is a vain desire that consumes me. I must suffer." The king was hurt by the thought that his dearest queen should have a longing ungratified. He pressed her to tell him what she wanted and promised to satisfy her wish.

Subhadda said, "Great King, my desire is hard to attain. I will not express it just now. But if you really wish to please me let all the hunters in your realm be summoned together. In their presence I shall tell you what I want." The king agreed. He ordered his minister, "Have it proclaimed by beat of drum that all the hunters in the kingdom

of Kashi must assemble here without delay" Accordingly the proclamation was broadcast far and wide Very soon the hunters gathered together outside the palace The king turned to Subhadda and said, "My dear, here are the best marksmen in the kingdom Their skill is unquestioned, and they will give their very lives for my sake Tell them what you want"

Queen Subhadda looked with satisfaction at the gathering of valiant marksmen ready to do her bidding She said, "Brave hunters of the Kingdom of Kashi, listen to my wish I have seen in a dream an elephant with six wonderful tusks Since then I have developed an intense longing to possess those tusks, white like milk and without a blemish. Unless I obtain my wish my life must ebb away"

The leader of the hunters said, "Your Majesty, none of our ancestors has left any record of an elephant with six tusks Such an animal has never been heard of Where may we find this elephant that you saw in your dream?" Now, while the leader was asking this question, Subhadda noticed in the crowd a hunter with a particularly repulsive appearance He was broad of foot, thick-bearded, gawky in the ribs His calf was swollen like a basket, his teeth were yellow, and his body was disfigured with scars This ugly fellow, whose name was Sonuttara, immediately struck the queen as a worthy ally in her scheme She asked the king's permission to take him aside and speak to him in private

Subhadda bade the man follow her to the topmost apartment of the seven-storeyed palace Having climbed there, she threw open a window facing north and, with a broad sweep of her hand, indicated the direction that the hunter was to take "There, my friend, are the Himalayas Go ahead, straight to the north, until you come to seven mountains in a row Beyond them is the Mount of Gold, decked with flowering trees from foot to crest Beneath the peak you will see a royal banyan tree, dark-green and rounded like an immense cloud Under this tree dwells the six-tusked elephant I saw in my dream. He is attended by

eight thousand followers—mighty beasts that strike terror into mortal hearts ”

Sonuttara was terrified at the very mention of the herd of wild elephants and said, “Noble Queen, in the royal palace there are jewels of every description. There is no dearth of turquoise, pearl or diamond. Why, then, do you insist on ivory? Why are you determined to bring about the death of all the hunters?” The queen reassured him. She told him that the elephant was doomed to be destroyed through her efforts, that she had been born a queen through supernatural intervention.

“You must go without fear”, she said. “The six-tusked elephant has done me great injury and it is destined that I should avenge it. You can easily deal with him when he is on his way back after the bath. The lake where he takes his bath is not far from the banyan tree. Crowned with a lotus, he returns from the lake with his favourite wife. The path abounds in flowers and echoes with the humming of bees. The elephant-king moves slowly, absorbed in joyous contentment. Attack him, deprive him of the tusks and bring them to me. I shall see that you are rewarded with the proprietorship of five villages of your choice.”

Sonuttara agreed to carry out her behest. The queen gave him a thousand pieces of gold and asked him to keep ready for the journey at the end of seven days. When the hunter went home, Subhadda sent for blacksmiths and cobblers. She ordered them to fashion tools of various kinds and to get together all the requisites for a long journey. They made axes, spades, hammers and saws, sickles for cutting tall grasses, iron staffs and three-pronged forks, leathern sacks, straps, and ropes.

After a week, Sonuttara presented himself before the queen. She gave him all the appliances and handed over to him a generous supply of provisions. The hunter, stout knave that he was, caught up the enormous bag as if it had been a bag of calves, flung it on his shoulders and descended from the palace.

Sonuttara placed all his equipment in a chariot, made

a final obeisance to the king and queen, and set out from the city. After passing through countless villages and hamlets he reached the northern frontier. There he left his retinue and, taking with him a few men of the border region, entered the deep forest. Passing beyond all human habitation, he sent back the border people as well and proceeded alone. He cut his way through clumps of thorny weeds and through a jungle of dense undergrowth, impenetrable even to a snake. He traversed hills and valleys, making good use of the instruments with which the queen had provided him. He passed through vast tracts of mud and morass, and waded through slimy rivulets.

At least he reached the row of seven mountains. One by one he climbed them and found himself on the Mount of Gold. Looking down, he saw the banyan tree described by Queen Subhadda. Sheltered by its eight thousand shoots, a herd of elephants rested in that delightful place. They were strong and shapely. Their tusks were massive like chariot-poles. And among them Sonuttara easily located the magnificent six-tusked elephant, white like milk and regal in every gesture.

From the top of the mountain the hunter also carefully noted the path which led from the banyan tree to the bathing pool. When the elephants went to bathe, he descended into the valley and dug a deep pit at a spot that he had carefully chosen. He concealed the top of the pit with branches and leaves. Then he made an entrance for himself and, wearing the yellow robe of an ascetic, he stood in the pit armed with a bow and poisoned arrows.

The Bodhisattva, who was at that time none other than Chhaddanta the elephant-king, returned from the pool after a refreshing bath. He walked with unhurried steps, enjoying the fragrant air. As he approached the pit the hunter let fly his poisoned shaft. The wounded beast roared with pain and, sliding through the boughs and leaves, fell into the pit.

King Chhaddanta was, for a moment, overcome with rage. He saw the hunter at the other end of the pit and, mad

with pain, was about to charge at his assailant. But when he saw that the man was wearing the yellow robe and the top-knot appropriate to a holy person, he desisted. Composing his mind, the Great Being extinguished all anger towards his enemy. He addressed Sonuttara in a voice soaked with compassion: "Why did you wound me, my friend?", he asked. "Was it for your own advantage, or was it at the command of someone else?"

The hunter said, "Subhadda, the favourite queen of the king of Kashi, saw your form in a dream. She developed a craving to possess your tusks. It is at her command that I have come here." Chhaddanta understood at once that it was the work of Cullasubhadda. He bore his pain without any bitterness and thought: 'She does not want any tusks. Her object is to have me killed. She knows what a goodly store of elephant-tusks I have here, relics of my departed ancestors. I could have given her all the ivory she needed.'

Then, turning towards Sonuttara, the Bodhisattva said, "Arise, O hunter, and saw off my tusks. Take them to your queen, ask her to be of good cheer, and assure her that my life is extinct, for I must soon die." The hunter approached, saw in hand, and tried to reach Chhaddanta's tusks. But the elephant was so tall that he could not get close to the tusks. To help him, the Great Being bent down and brought his head to a convenient level. Then Sonuttara climbed up the trunk and stood on Chhaddanta's forehead. He inserted his foot into the mouth, pressing the fleshy part with his knee, and thrust his saw deep into the cavity.

The Bodhisattva suffered excruciating pain. His mouth was filled with blood. The hunter shifted about from place to place, but was still unable to cut the tusks. The elephant-king said, "What is the trouble now, Sir? Are you not able to cut my tusks? Very well, I shall help you. Please place the saw in my trunk in the correct position. I no longer have the strength to lift my trunk, but if the saw is placed there I can move it sideways."

The hunter did as he was told. The Great Being, whose strength was fast ebbing away, moved the saw with great

difficulty As the instrument went forward and backward his agony was extreme At last the tusks came off Handing them over to Sonuttara, Chhaddanta said, "Friend hunter, I give away my tusks not because I have no fondness for them but because the tusks of Omniscience are a thousand times dearer to me May this meritorious act of mine lead me to knowledge " With these words he lay down Before the other elephants reached there, he was dead

The herd of elephants lamented and wept for their leader Queen Mahasubhadda bewailed with great sorrow the loss of her dear husband After a while the elephants prayed to the buddhas and said, "O merciful buddhas, our king, who was always devoted to you, is dead Come and see his body " Hearing these words, five hundred buddhas glided through the air and alighted in the enclosure Two young elephants lifted up with their trunks the body of Chhaddanta, causing it to make a gesture of homage in the presence of the buddhas

The bodily frame of mighty Chhaddanta was then raised on a pyre and cremated The buddhas recited holy scriptures throughout the night After extinguishing the flames, the eight thousand elephants tearfully made their way to the lake There they bathed and, led by Queen Mahasubhadda, returned to the Golden Cave

Meanwhile Sonuttara journeyed towards Banaras When he reached the palace, Queen Subhadda came out to greet him Offering up the tusks, Sonuttara said, "Lady, here is the gift you wanted The elephant-king against whom you had a grudge is dead "

The queen received the tusks They emitted glorious rays of six colours She gazed upon them for a long while, placing them now on her jewelled fan and now in her lap Then, thinking of the Great Being who had been her dear lord, she was seized with sorrow "Alas", she cried, "With a poisoned shaft has he slain the Great Being " Then, unable to endure the grief, her heart was shattered and she died

The Obtuse Monkeys

ONCE upon a time a tribe of monkeys lived happily in the pleasure-garden of the king of Banaras. The king's gardener looked upon them as his friends and they, in their turn, were devoted to him.

Now one day a great festival was to take place in the city. The festive drum sounded early in the morning, and the townsfolk turned out in thousands to keep holiday. The king's gardener felt a craving to join the festivities. He thought to himself, 'Why should I not have a holiday once in a while? After all, there is very little to do in the park. Only a few young saplings have to be watered. Surely my friends, the monkeys, can do that much for me.'

So he went to the leader of the monkeys and said, "My friend, you know that this park has to be well looked after. His Majesty and his subjects enjoy many benefits from it. Today there is holiday-making in the city and I desire to take the day off. At the same time I cannot neglect the park. As you know, young plants have got to be watered every day. Couldn't you do the job for me, just for today?" The leader of the monkeys said, "Oh yes, brother. We shall look after your plants. Go and make merry to your heart's content."

"Thank you", said the gardener, "but see that you do not let me down." And then, after supplying the monkeys with waterskins and wooden buckets, he went off to the city.

The monkeys immediately started their work of watering the young plants. Their leader instructed them in this way: "Friends, remember that we have only a limited amount of water. We must not waste it, because if it is finished before the work is done we shall find it difficult to get more. We should water the trees according to their requirements. So it would be better if you pull out each young plant and examine the size of its roots. Then you can give plenty of water to those which have big and long

roots On the contrary, a small quantity of water will do for plants with tiny roots ”

“You are quite right, Sir”, said the other monkeys, and did as their leader told them They pulled out all the young plants in the garden and watered them according to the size of their roots

Thus, with every desire to do good, the faithful monkeys did great harm to their friend, the gardener, to the king, and to all those who enjoyed the benefits of the pleasure-garden

And that is what the ignorant and the foolish always do—they harm those whom they want to help

ARAMADUSAKA JATAKA

A Vain Dispute

ONCE upon a time a lion and a tiger lived together at the foot of a certain mountain They shared everything in common and occupied the same cave In course of time they became very close friends indeed Now at that time the Bodhisattva, leading the life of a hermit, had also taken up his abode at the foot of the same mountain

One day, when it was cold and chilly, a mighty dispute arose between the two friends The tiger said, “My dear fellow, you must know that the dark half of the month is always cold ” To this the lion retorted, “You are quite wrong, my friend The fact is that the moonlit half of the month is always colder than the dark fortnight ” And so they went on arguing for a long time When they could not settle the question, they ultimately went to the Bodhisattva and asked him to decide the matter The Bodhisattva recited these lines

Be it the moonlit half or be it the dark,
How will it affect the cold, oh foolish ones ?

You must know that the cold is caused by the wind,
And so I decide that both of you are right !

And in this way the Bodhisattva established peace between the lion and the tiger

MALUTA JATAKA

Bhuridatta and the Snake-charmer

I

ONCE, when the Master dwelt in the Jetavana at Savatthi, he looked upon the assembly of brethren and made ready to give his discourse. Now some of the brethren were keeping a fast that day. When the Tathagata heard about this he said, "It is good that you keep fasting-days, O brethren. Yet it is not a matter of surprise that you, who have a Buddha like me for your teacher, should observe fasts. Even in olden times there were people who kept fasts, although many of them were without the guidance of any teacher."

And the Buddha proceeded to tell them an old legend

II

Once upon a time Brahmadata, the king of Banaras, made his son Viceroy. But, when he saw the fame and glory of the prince increase day by day, he became suspicious that the Viceroy might seize his kingdom. So he sent his son away and asked him to live at some other place. "When I am dead", he said, "come back to Banaras and rule this kingdom." The prince obeyed and, leaving the capital city, built for himself a little hut on the Yamuna. There he lived in peace, sustaining himself on roots and fruits.

One day a young *naga* female, who had lost her husband

and was wandering about in her loneliness, came upon the hut. The prince was away. She entered the hut, saw the wooden bedstead and other paraphernalia, and thought 'This is the dwelling-place of some ascetic. But I do not know whether he is true to his faith, or a lover of pleasure at heart. I shall test him, and if he is not a true ascetic I shall take him for my husband.' So she obtained from the *naga-world* divine flowers and perfumes. With these she prepared a luxurious bed. She cleaned and rearranged the hut and went away.

When the prince returned, he was filled with wonder and derived great pleasure from the flowers and perfumes. Not being a true ascetic at heart, he lay down on the soft couch and fell fast asleep. At dawn he got up and went out in search of fruit. The female *naga* saw that the bed had been slept in, and was convinced that the man was no ascetic. So she repeated the arrangements on several nights. The prince, though baffled, enjoyed all the luxuries offered to him. At last the *naga* woman showed herself in all her beauty and the prince at once fell in love with her. She asked him who he was and the prince replied, "I am Brahmadattakumara, the prince of Banaras. But why are you wandering about, leaving the abode of *nagas*?"

The woman said, "My Lord, when I became a widow I was jealous of the happiness of other women. So I came away seeking a husband."

The prince said, "I do not belong to the brotherhood of ascetics. Let us marry and make our home here." And so the two were united in marriage. By her magic power the *naga* woman obtained a beautiful house and filled it with all the fine things that a prince is accustomed to. In course of time she delivered two children, a son, whom they called Sagara-Brahmadatta, and a daughter who was named Samuddaja.

Some years passed peacefully. One day a traveller from Banaras happened to see the prince and recognised him at once. He spent a few days in the prince's house and then continued his homeward journey. When he reached

Banaras he found that King Brahmadata had just died and the ministers were looking out for a suitable successor. The traveller told them where the prince was living and the ministers went there in a body. After greeting him respectfully the ministers requested the prince to take charge of the kingdom. Brahmadatakumara asked the advice of his wife. She said, "My Lord, I cannot go. We *nagas* possess deadly poison. A little thing upsets us. If I see or hear anything that angers me, my glance will cause destruction. But you can take the children. You must remember, however, that they have inherited something of the *naga* temperament from me. They love to be near water, so you must not take them by the land route. Take them in a boat. And when you reach home see that a lake is made for them near the palace so that they may be able to play about in water whenever they feel like it."

Then, having saluted the prince and fondly embraced her children, she departed to the *naga-world*. The prince took his children to Banaras in a boat. He had a lake made on the outskirts of the city and built a magnificent ship in which his children could spend as much time as they liked on the surface of the lake.

One day, as the lads were playing about, they saw a turtle. Running to their father they said, "There is a *yakṣa* in the lake. We are frightened." The king ordered his men to seize the turtle and had him thrown into the whirlpool of the Yamuna. The current carried the turtle to the land of the *nagas*. Now at that time the sons of the *naga-king*, Dhatarattha, were bathing in the river. They were also frightened and at their behest the *naga* soldiers captured the turtle. They were about to kill him when the turtle thought of a device to save himself. He said, "Gentlemen, my name is Chittachula. I am a messenger of the king of Banaras. Our king wishes to give his daughter in marriage to your master, King Dhatarattha. Take me to him." So they carried him to the king of *nagas*. At first the *naga-king* refused to believe him but the turtle spoke so cleverly that he soon managed to convince King Dhatarattha.

about the genuineness of his mission "Sir", he said, "our monarch has many messengers He sends men on dry land, birds in the air and turtles in the water I am his favourite envoy That is why he has sent me on this important mission In order to win the friendship of the *nagas*, he wishes to give his daughter Samuddaja in marriage to you Pray do not refuse "

The king felt highly flattered and sent his own messengers along with the turtle to arrange the details of the wedding In the course of the journey the turtle escaped, pretending to look for some lotus-buds as a gift for the king of Banaras When the messengers reached the palace the king showed them all honour and asked them what they wanted

They said, "We have come from King Dhatarattha He asks for your health and would be happy if you give your daughter Samuddaja as his queen "

The king was baffled by this unexpected proposal He said, "Gentlemen, how can a man give his daughter in marriage to a *naga-king* ? I am honoured by your master's proposal but I cannot accept it "

The messengers, hot-blooded youths as they were, flew into a rage They said, "If an alliance with the *naga-king* seems improper to you why did you send your envoy to our Court ? Now we shall accept no refusal It is a matter of honour "

The king of Banaras protested that he had never sent any envoy But they did not hear him and returned to the kingdom of the *nagas*

Dhatarattha invaded the kingdom of Banaras with his followers *Nagas* were seen everywhere—over the tanks and the palaces, the public roads and even on tree-tops Frightened by the sight of so many snakes, the women of the palace started screaming The common people crowded around the king and begged of him to save them by agreeing to the marriage

King Brahmadattakumara had to yield The princess was adorned with ornaments, placed in a richly decorated carriage, and sent to the land of the *nagas* King Dhatarattha

received her and escorted her into the palace. She became his Chief Queen. The gardens and the lakes of the *raga-world*, its jewelled palaces and golden towers, enchanted her. King Dhatarattha ordered the attendants to conceal their *raga* form and assume a human appearance while waiting upon Samuddaja.

For many years the king of the *ragas* and his queen, who was once the princess of Banaras, lived together in great happiness.

III

In course of time Samuddaja delivered four sons—Sudasana, Datta, Subhaga, and Aruttha. Among these, her second son, Datta, was really the Bodhisattva reincarnated as a prince.

The four princes grew up and acquired all the knowledge befitting their position. Their father gave each of them a glorious kingdom and they dwelt in their respective homes along with their wives.

Even as a child Datta was of a thoughtful temperament. Every fortnight he would visit his father and discuss some deep question with him. Sometimes his father would take him to the world of the gods to wait upon Indra. One day Indra asked a question which none of the gods was able to answer. But the Great Being, in the form of Datta, answered it at once. Indra honoured him with divine flowers and said, "Oh Datta, you are endowed with wisdom as broad as the earth. Henceforth you shall be called Bhuridatta." And from that moment Samuddaja's second son attained fame under the name of Bhuridatta.

By and by Bhuridatta acquired a great passion for the religious life. He began to observe fasts. His mother, Samuddaja, encouraged him but warned him not to go outside the *raga-kingdom*. For many days Bhuridatta obeyed her advice. He kept his fasts only in the parks and the gardens of an empty palace in the city of the *ragas*. But he was disturbed by the *raga-naiads*, who waited on

him with their musical instruments and distracted him from his religious life Bhuridatta thought 'If I remain here my fasts will come to nothing I must go to the haunts of men and continue my labours there' So he called his chief wife and said, "My dear, I am going to the land of mortals I shall continue my religious practices under a banyan tree on the bank of the Yamuna There is an ant-hill near the tree, and I shall lie down there observing the fast Every morning let ten of your women come with musical instruments and conduct me back to the accompaniment of song and dance "

Every evening Bhuridatta folded his body on the top of the ant-hill and said aloud, "Let anyone who likes take away my skin or bones or blood " All night he would lie on the ant-hill and at dawn the *naga-maidens* would come and conduct him back In this fashion he observed the fast for a very long period

Now at that time a Brahmun, who dwelt in a village nearby, had taken to hunting in the forest along with his son They used to set snares and kill wild animals One day the Brahmun failed to catch anything and was in despair Towards evening he managed to wound a deer But the deer did not fall at once The two hunters pursued it until at last they were able to track it down near the ant-hill on which Bhuridatta observed penance By the time they skinned their prey, the sun had set So they climbed the banyan tree and lay down among its branches At dawn the Brahmun woke up and heard the snake-maidens playing upon musical instruments before the Bodhisattva The Bodhisattva laid aside his snake's body and assumed a divine form The maidens perfumed and garlanded him As soon as the Brahmun came down from the tree all the maidens vanished and the Bodhisattva was left alone

The Brahmun asked him, "Sir, who are you? Your body is bright like a blazing fire Even in the middle of this forest heavenly maidens wait on you Are you Indra himself or some snake-prince?"

The Bodhisattva knew that if he were to proclaim himself

to be a god the Brahmin would believe him. But he told the truth and proclaimed his *naga-birth*. "I am Bhuridatta", he said, "and my mother is Samuddaja. I am the son of Dhatarattha, the king of the *nagas*."

Having said this Bhuridatta reflected, "This Brahmin is fierce and cruel. He may betray me to a snake-charmer. My fast will be interrupted. It would be much better to win him over." So he said, "Oh Brahmin, I shall heap honour and wealth upon you. Come to my home in the *naga-kingdom*."

"Where is your home, Sir?", asked the Brahmin.

The Bodhisattva replied, "Beneath the dark-blue waves there is a wondrous city. There the peacocks and the herons sing for joy. Come with me and you shall enjoy bliss."

The Brahmin was tempted. He called his son and the two of them were transported to the *naga-kingdom*. Bhuridatta bestowed upon them great prosperity.

After living in Bhuridatta's home for a year the Brahmin, through lack of previous merit, became discontented and longed to return to the world of men. But he was afraid that Bhuridatta would detain him against his will. So he thought of a clever argument. One day when Bhuridatta asked him whether he lacked anything, the Brahmin said, "How can I lack anything here? I am sharing your prosperity in this wonderful city. There are open fields, green pastures, and bowers covered with jasmynes. There are sacred shrines in every wood. The lakes are full of beautiful swans. Lotus-leaves serve as soft carpets. There are gorgeous palaces where heavenly maidens dance. I am sure there is nothing in Indra's palace that you do not have here."

Bhuridatta cut him short and said, "Do not say so, Brahmin. Compared to Indra's glory, ours is like a mustard-seed beside the mighty Himalayas. Indeed it is in order to attain to Indra's paradise that I am observing the fast on the top of the ant-hill every night."

The Brahmin grasped his opportunity and said, "Sir, if

even *you* go to the land of mortals and practise penance for the sake of attaining Indra's paradise, what about people like us ? We have made our livelihood by slaughtering living animals. Is it not desirable that we should atone for our sins by leading the life of ascetics ? I beseech you, allow us to go back to the forest "

The Bodhisattva answered, "Well, it was my desire that you should live with us happily. But if you want to go back, please yourself. I shall give you a jewel that grants all desires. No harm will come to you "

But the Brahmin refused the jewel, saying, "What are life's pleasures to me ? I shall live like an ascetic " The Bodhisattva wished him success and said, "If you decide to give up the ascetic life, come back to me and I shall make you prosperous again "

The Brahmin said he would certainly seek Bhuridatta's aid whenever he was in need. The Great Being, perceiving that he had no desire to prolong his stay in the *naga-kingdom*, asked his attendants to escort the Brahmin and his son back to the world of mortals. When they reached the forest and saw the lake near which they had wounded the deer, they took off their clothes and made ready to bathe. At that very moment their costly robes vanished and they found themselves clothed in their old rags once again. Their jewels, too, disappeared, and their bows and arrows returned miraculously.

The Brahmin and his son went back home. The Brahmin's wife asked them where they had been all that while. The son said, 'Oh mother, Bhuridatta, the great king of the *nagas*, invited us to his kingdom. We stayed there in great luxury but at last our longing for home has brought us back "

"Have you brought any jewels from the land of *nagas* ?", the mother asked.

"None, mother "

"And why not ? Did the great king give you nothing ?"

"The king offered my father a jewel which grants all desires. But father did not accept it. He has decided to become an ascetic "

At this the Brahmin's wife flew into a rage and strongly upbraided her husband "You good-for-nothing!", she said, "after leaving me for such a long time with the burden of the children, and after enjoying yourself in the land of the *nagas*, you want to become an ascetic! And you refused the precious jewel which might have saved us from poverty for all time to come." With these words she struck him with her frying-pan and asked him to clear out

The Brahmin pacified her. He said, "Do not be angry, my dear. As long as there are animals in the forest I shall support you and your children."

And so the next day he again went to the forest with his son and resumed the practice of killing animals for his livelihood. His vows of asceticism were forgotten. All worthy citizens looked upon him with contempt and began to treat him as an outcast.

IV

Between the *nagas* and the *garudas* there was an ancient quarrel. Whenever a *garuda* saw a *naga* he was tempted to swoop down and seize him. Now one day a mighty *garuda* bird, dwelling in a silk-cotton tree in the Himalayas, seized a *naga* by the head. While the *garuda* was flying upwards the *naga* caught the branch of a banyan tree and tried to entwine its body around it. The *garuda*, unaware of this, continued to fly. Its strength was so great that the banyan tree was dislodged from its roots and carried upwards into the sky. When the bird had killed the *naga* and dropped its body, the banyan tree fell down with a mighty thud. The *garuda*, curious to know where he had picked up the tree, discovered that an old ascetic had been practising austerities under it. Feeling guilty, the *garuda* approached the ascetic and offered him a spell which bestowed upon its possessor complete power over snakes.

The ascetic protested that he needed no spell, but when repeatedly pressed by the *garuda* he accepted it. As it happened, the very next day a poor Brahmin from Banaras,

who was heavily in debt, passed through the forest. He stopped at the ascetic's hermitage and, in return for his devotion, the ascetic gave him the spell. The Brahmin made up his mind to use the spell and earn his living as a snake-charmer.

After a while the Brahmin took leave of the ascetic and continued his journey homewards. As he was passing through the forest he saw the *naga-maidens* who had come to wait upon Bhuridatta. They had with them the miraculous jewel that granted all desires—the jewel which Bhuridatta had once offered to his guest in the *naga-kingdom*. The Brahmin's sudden appearance frightened the maidens and they disappeared leaving the jewel behind. The Brahmin got hold of the jewel and rejoiced at the thought that his spell had already started yielding results. He continued his journey and, since the charm which he now possessed was known as the Alambayana spell, he adopted the name of Alambayana.

Meanwhile the outcast Brahmin, who had gone back upon his vow of becoming an ascetic, entered the deep forest in search of game. He saw Alambayana, recognized the jewel in his hand, and made up his mind to get possession of it. His son, Somadatta, protested, "Oh, father!", he said, "why do you hanker after it now? Bhuridatta offered it to you of his own free will and you refused it. Now please do not try to deprive this Brahmin of it." But the Brahmin asked his son to keep silent and entered into conversation with Alambayana.

The Brahmin offered to pay large quantities of gold in exchange for the jewel. But Alambayana said he would not part with it for any reward except one—he wanted to capture the *naga* who was the rightful owner of the jewel. His design was to enslave the *naga* and compel it to perform before royal audiences at his command. In this way Alambayana hoped to make a vast fortune. The Brahmin said, "Well, in that case I can help you. I can take you to the real owner of this gem and you can capture him while he is asleep." Somadatta protested against this scheme, and

refused to be a party to this sinful bargain. He left his father and wandered in distant regions. There he perfected his spiritual powers through mystic meditation and was ultimately born in the *Brahma-world*.

The outcast Brahmin escorted Alambayana to the ant-hill on which Bhuridatta lay fasting. The Great Being understood his design and thought 'Alas, I took this fellow to my home and made him prosperous. I offered him the jewel but he did not take it, and falsely proclaimed that he was turning an ascetic. Now he has come here with a snake-charmer to catch me. But I must not be angry. Whether this Alambayana tortures me or cuts me to pieces, I must keep calm.' And so, closing his eyes, and following the highest ideal of Resolution, he bent his head between his hood and lay perfectly still.

"Oh Alambayana!", said the Brahmin, "seize this *naga* and give me the gem." Alambayana said, "Take it, Oh Brahmin", and threw the gem towards him. But it slipped out of the Brahmin's hand and disappeared into the *naga-world*. Thus the outcast Brahmin lost three valuable possessions—the gem that had been offered to him, his own son, and the friendship of Bhuridatta. He went away lamenting loudly and repenting his folly.

Alambayana anointed himself with a drug, uttered the spell, and seized the *naga* by the tail. Forcing its mouth open he put a portion of the drug into it. The pure-natured *naga-king*, who was really the Bodhisattva, allowed his tormentor to do what he liked. Alambayana held the snake by the tail, shook him violently, and crushed some of his bones. Having thus made Bhuridatta helpless, Alambayana made a basket of creepers and threw him into it. Then he went about from village to village and made the *naga* dance in the presence of admiring crowds. The Bodhisattva did his master's bidding without anger. He swelled his hood, crept out of the basket and re-entered it, altered his colour from blue to yellow or red, emitted smoke and showed all the tricks that he was commanded to display. People showered upon the snake-charmer gold and silver.

coins, costly garments, and many other luxuries

Within a short period Alambayana became extremely rich. But his appetite for wealth increased still further. He decided to give a performance in the presence of the king of Banaras. He fashioned a basket studded with rubies, ordered a luxurious carriage, and started with a great retinue of servants. On the road to Banaras he made the Great Being dance and show numerous tricks in every wayside village. When at last he reached Banaras, he found that reports of his thrilling shows had preceded him. The king made a proclamation by beat of drum that a wonderful snake-charmer was coming, and the citizens were invited to witness the performance.

V

At the same moment when the Bodhisattva was seized by Alambayana, his mother Samuddaja saw an evil dream. She dreamt that a black man with red eyes had cut off her arm with a sword and was carrying it away. She jumped out of bed in terror and understood that the dream related to her son. She thought 'How is it that my son has not seen me for such a long time? Some evil must have befallen him.' When her eldest son Sudassana came to visit her she confided to him her fears about Bhuridatta. Meanwhile Bhuridatta's wives, not finding him on the top of the ant-hill came to Samuddaja's palace weeping and lamenting. The entire palace was filled with mournful sounds, as if a forest of *sal* trees had been struck by the storm of doomsday.

Sudassana summoned his other two brothers, Aruttha and Subhaga. He asked Subhaga to go towards the Himalayas in search of Bhuridatta, while Aruttha was sent to the world of the gods. "Oh Aruttha", he said, "it is possible that the gods might have summoned our brother to their abode in order to learn the True Law from him. You should go there and try to get news of him. Meanwhile I shall go to the land of mortals and look for him."

Bhuridatta had a step-sister named Accimukhi who

loved him dearly As Sudassana was setting out, she approached him and asked permission to accompany him But Sudassana had assumed the garb of an ascetic and he said, "Sister, you cannot come with me because I am supposed to be a hermit " Accimukhi replied, "I shall become a little frog and hide in your matted hair " Sudassana agreed to this and took the road to Banaras while his sister lay concealed within his matted locks in the form of a frog He reached the city when Alambayana was about to give his show

Alambayana placed the gem-encrusted basket on a costly rug and, at the king's command, started the show He gave the signal and said, "Come here, Oh King of *nagas* " The Great Being put out his head and surveyed the spectators His eyes rested on his brother and he was overwhelmed with emotion He went up to Sudassana, laid his head on his feet and wept When he returned to the basket Alambayana thought 'This *naga* must have bitten the ascetic I must comfort him, otherwise the crowd will turn against me ' So he went to Sudassana and said gently, "Sir, the snake slipped out of my hand I hope he did not bite you Even if he did, you must not worry There is no harm in his bite "

Sudassana was waiting for this chance to provoke the snake-charmer He laughed and said, "Don't bother about me, snake-charmer I have seen many snakes like yours, and I myself know charms that you have never heard of "

Alambayana answered angrily, "Who is this lout dressed as a hermit ? He dares to challenge me ! Very well, let every one present here judge between us "

At this Sudassana said, "A frog shall be my champion, let the snake be yours My frog will show its power Let the king judge "

And then, summoning his sister, he said, "Oh Accimukhi ! come out of my matted locks and show your power " With these words he stretched out his right hand Accimukhi croaked thrice and jumped upon his shoulder From there she dropped three drops of poison on Sudassana's palm,

and again entered his matted locks. Sudassana gazed upon the drops of poison and exclaimed, "Beware, this country will be destroyed!" His words resounded through the kingdom of Banaras, and everyone was terrified. The king asked him what he meant by such an ominous warning. Sudassana said, "Oh King! these drops of poison emitted by my frog are so deadly that I cannot place them anywhere without serious consequences."

The king said, "Why, is not this field big enough? Drop the poison here."

"The moment I drop it, all the plants and creepers will be burnt up. The ground will become barren for ever."

"Well, then, fling it into the sky."

"If I were to do that, no rain or snow will come from heaven for seven long years."

"In that case why not throw it into the water?"

"Even that cannot be done. Every fish and turtle would perish and the mighty ocean would become the abode of death."

The king was baffled and said, "Oh ascetic! I can think of nothing else. Now it is for you to decide. Tell me what is to be done and I shall see that your wishes are carried out." Sudassana ordered three holes to be dug in the ground. When this was done he filled the middle hole with potent herbs, the second with cow-dung and the third with certain medicines. Then he placed the drops of poison into the middle hole. A flame sprang up and filled the hole with smoke. It spread to the other holes and consumed all the drugs, producing unbearable heat. Alambayana was standing near the hole containing medicines. The poisoned smoke enveloped his body. His skin was bleached and he was transformed into a leper. Filled with terror, he exclaimed, "I set the snake-king free!" As soon as these words were uttered Bhuridatta came out of the basket, abandoned the form of a snake, and assumed a new form, radiant and glorious. He stood with all the splendour of Indra himself.

When the Great Being revealed himself thus, Sudassana and Accimukhi greeted him affectionately. Turning to the

king of Banaras, Sudassana asked, "Oh King ! were you not named Sagara-Brahmadatta ?"

"Yes, that is my name", said the king

"Do you not know whose children we are ?"

"No, I know nothing about you, nor have I ever seen you before "

"Perhaps you may be knowing that the king of Kashi once gave his daughter in marriage to Dhatarattha, the Lord of the *nagas* "

"How can I forget her ? She was Samuddaja, my sister !"

"In that case you are our uncle We are the sons of Samuddaja "

When the king heard this he embraced them and conducted them to the palace with great affection He asked Bhuridatta how Alambayana had caught him, and the Great Being related the whole story The king's mind was enlightened and he became acquainted with the Law of Righteousness

After spending some time with their uncle, Sudassana and Bhuridatta, along with their step-sister Accimukhi, bade farewell to Banaras and returned to the *naga-world* When the *nagas* saw how frail and exhausted Bhuridatta had become through all the sufferings he had undergone, there was lamentation The Great Being had spent more than a month curled up in a basket He now fell ill and took to his bed Many *nagas* came to visit him In order to save him from exertion, his brother Aruttha, who had returned from the world of the gods, was posted as door-keeper outside Bhuridatta's residence

VI

Meanwhile the outcast Brahmin, having heard of the fate that had overtaken Alambayana, was frightened about his own future He thought 'The snake-charmer has become a leper because he tortured Bhuridatta I, too, betrayed him through my lust for a jewel, although he had been my benefactor I must wash away this crime by bathing in the

holy waters of Yamuna ' And so he came to the bank of the Yamuna and made preparations for a ceremonial bath

At that very moment Bhuridatta's younger brother, Subhaga, who had gone to the region of the Himalayas in search of the Great Being, happened to return He saw the outcast Brahmin and overheard him as he was recalling his misdeeds Subhaga decided to punish the Brahmin for his treachery towards Bhuridatta He quietly entered the water and coiled himself round the Brahmin's feet The Brahmin begged for mercy At first Subhaga refused to spare him But the Brahmin, seeking to save his life by clever arguments, said, "You must know that it is a sin to kill a Brahmin Who would conduct prayers, who would offer libations to the sacred fire, if Brahmins were punished as you are punishing me ?"

At this Subhaga's determination weakened He decided to take the Brahmin to the *naga-world* and ask his brother what punishment should be given to him So he seized the outcast Brahmin by the neck, shook him by the hair and, reviling him with loud abuse, dragged him to the gate of Bhuridatta's palace His brother Ariththa, who was acting as door-keeper, rebuked him for his violence He said, "Subhaga, do not hurt him All Brahmins are the sons of Brahman, the Great Spirit If we hurt this man, Brahman would be angry and destroy our *naga-world*" Ariththa went on to describe all the virtues of Brahmins—how they carry out religious duties, how they determine the responsibilities of the four castes, how they impart learning to those who deserve it, and soon

Many *nagas* heard Ariththa's words with interest They became admirers of the Brahmins and started repeating all the legends about the noble deeds of Brahmins in the past The Great Being heard of all that was being said in the *naga-kingdom* He felt anxious, and decided to put an end to these false doctrines and fantastic stories He bathed, ascended a pulpit, and called all the *nagas* together Then, turning towards Ariththa, he started his discourse

"Brother Ariththa", said Bhuridatta, "what you have

said about the Brahmins and the Vedas is false. The sacrifice of victims cannot lead to heaven. The Vedas lure and tempt people into fruitless toil. The study of the Vedas is like a mirage. It may catch the careless eye, but the prudent man will steer clear of it. The Vedas have no hidden power to save a traitor or a coward from his just punishment. Neither fire nor water should be worshipped as a god. To worship fire, the common drudge of all of us, and then lead a life of sin, is a senseless and blind course of action. These Brahmins require a livelihood, and so they tell us that Brahma himself worships fire. But why should Brahma, who plans and creates all things, worship an object of his own creation? The Brahmins tell us that they alone can conduct sacrifices while the Kshatriyas must fight, the Vaishyas plough, and the Shudras obey. These deceitful rules are enforced and fools believe the fictions that the Brahmins invent.

"The world is full of woe. Why does not Brahma set it right? If his power is so great, why is his hand so rarely raised to bless? Why is every creature condemned to pain? Why do falsehood and ignorance prevail over truth and justice? The Brahmins lead animals to the sacrifice. But has any one seen a goat desirous of being slain so that it may acquire heavenly bliss? The Brahmins compose sentences in metrical forms and ask their simple followers to learn them by rote. The more obscure their words, the more their hearers are impressed."

The assembly of the *nagas* was filled with knowledge, enlightened by the Great Being's discourse. Bhuridatta delivered the outcast Brahmin from the *naga-world* and did not wound him with a single word of reproach.

After a few days he proclaimed by beat of drum that he would visit his maternal uncle. He crossed the Yamuna and, with great pomp and magnificence, proceeded towards Banaras. His mother Samuddaja accompanied him. She greeted her brother, Sagara-Brahmadatta, and her father Brahmadattakumara who was living in retirement in a hermitage.

The Bodhisattva continued to follow the precepts of his life and kept his self-imposed fasts without interruption. At last he departed from existence and ascended to Indra's heaven.

VII

Such was the legend narrated by the Enlightened One. Having related the story of Bhuridatta, the Buddha said, "Brethren, you have heard how wise men fulfilled the duties of the fast-day even in former times, before the Buddha was born. You must know that at that time King Dhatarattha and Queen Samuddaja were my parents, Devadatta was the outcast Brahmin, Ananda was Somadatta, Sariputta was Sudassana, Moggallana was Subhaga. And I myself, O Brethren, was Bhuridatta."

BHURIDATTA JATAKA

The King Who Talked Too Much

ONCE upon a time the Bodhisattva was born in the court of a great king and, when he grew up, became the king's chief adviser. The king had many virtues, but unfortunately he had one bad habit—he talked too much. All the time he chattered away, and in his presence no one else had the chance to put in a word. The Bodhisattva, eager to cure the king of his habit, kept watching for a suitable opportunity.

After many years such an opportunity came unexpectedly. And this is how it happened.

In a certain pond there lived a turtle. Two young geese, happening to come to the pond in search of food, struck up acquaintance with him. By and by the three became close friends. When the time came to return home, the geese said, "Friend turtle, we have a lovely home in the Himalayas. It is a golden cave. You will enjoy living with us

Will you accompany us?"

"I should be delighted", said the turtle, "but how can I get there? You know very well that I cannot fly"

"Oh, don't bother about that. We shall take you, if only you can keep your mouth shut and promise not to utter a word"

The turtle agreed, and the geese thought of a device by which he could travel with them. They got hold of a stick of suitable size and made the turtle hold it between his teeth. Then each of them held one end of the stick and flew high up in the air.

In the course of their journey they approached the palace of the king of Banaras. A company of children, playing about in the neighbourhood of the palace, saw the strange sight in the sky. In their surprise they exclaimed, "Look, look! Two geese are carrying a turtle on a stick." The turtle heard this remark and, being extremely talkative by nature, could not remain silent. He had an uncontrollable impulse to cry out, "Well, if my friends *do* carry me on a stick, what business is it of yours, you mischievous brats?" But the moment he opened his lips his teeth lost their hold on the stick and, falling into the open courtyard, he split in two.

This was followed by a great uproar. People crowded around the body of the turtle and there was a good deal of excitement. The king and the Bodhisattva also visited the spot. The king asked his adviser, "Sir, what made this creature fall?" The Bodhisattva rejoiced at the thought that he at last had an opportunity to admonish the king. And he said, "Oh King, such is the misfortune in store for those who have too much tongue, and set no limit to their talking." And he recited the following verse

Although he had a stick between
The turtle talked, and hurtled his teeth
Mark well, Oh mighty king, down to death
Speak in season, wisely, or never mark well,
at all

The king of Banaras asked the Bodhisattva, "My friend,

are you referring to me ?”

“It may be you, oh king, or it may be some one else”, said the Bodhisattva, “but whoever talks beyond measure will come to grief”

And from that day the king of Banaras, overcoming his garrulity, became a man of few words

KACCHAPA JATAKA

The Panic-stricken Animals

ONCE, when Brahmadata was the king of Banaras, the Bodhisattva was born as a lion. When he grew up he became the master of a mighty forest near the shore of the western ocean. Wisely and well did he rule that forest teeming with innumerable beasts, big and small.

Between the forest and the ocean there was a grove of palms in which there was a sprinkling of *bel* trees as well. A certain hare lived in this grove under a palm sapling near a full-grown *bel* tree. One day, as the hare was resting after his midday meal, his mind wandered and he imagined all kinds of strange things. Suddenly the thought struck him: ‘If this earth should break up, what would become of me ?’ And, as luck would have it, at that very moment a ripe *bel* fruit fell upon a leaf of the palm sapling.

The hare was shaken out of his reverie. He shouted, “This solid earth is collapsing! My end approaches!”, and, without looking behind him, the timid hare scampered off. After a while he met another hare who asked him why he was running. “Oh, don’t ask me, the news is bad indeed”, said the first hare. The second hare insisted on an answer and kept running after the first. Stopping for a moment, the first exclaimed, “The earth is breaking up. Fly for dear life.” And so the two continued their flight.

Very soon they were joined by others until a hundred thousand hares found themselves running blindly. They

were seen by a deer who, on being told that the earth was breaking up, spread the word among other deer. A huge herd of deer was soon in flight. They were followed by buffaloes, oxen, boars, tigers and elephants. By degrees all the inhabitants of that vast forest started running in sheer panic.

When the Bodhisattva saw this meaningless flight, and was told the reason behind it, he pondered, 'Now, now Surely the earth is not collapsing. These foolish animals must have mistaken some ordinary sound for an earthquake. If I don't make an effort to save them, they will all perish.' So he overtook them and intercepted their flight at the foot of a mountain. He roared loudly and they all stopped, huddling together at the sight of a lion. The king approached them and said in a soothing voice, "My dear friends, what is all this? Why are you running away?"

"The earth is breaking up", they answered.

"Who saw it breaking up?", asked the Bodhisattva.

After a while the answer came, "The buffaloes know all about it."

So the Bodhisattva asked the buffaloes. They said, "We don't know, the tigers told us." But the tigers, in their turn, said, "The oxen must have seen the earth collapsing. They warned us." The oxen pointed to the boars, and the boars to the deer. The deer said, "We have no knowledge. You must ask the hares." When the hares were questioned, they pointed to one tiny member of their species and said, "This fellow told us. He saw the event with his own eyes."

The Bodhisattva asked the hare, "Is it true, little one, that the earth is breaking up?"

"Yes, sir, I have seen it myself."

"Where were you when this happened?"

"Sir, I was near the ocean, in a palm grove. I was lying quietly in the shade of a palm sapling near a *bel* tree. I thought to myself, 'Where shall I go if this earth were to break up', and at that very moment I heard a mighty sound. The earth began to crack. And so I fled."

The lion, who was really the Great Being, understood what had happened. He reconstructed the sequence in his mind. 'Ah', he thought, 'it is obvious that a *bel* fruit must have dropped upon a palm leaf. Hearing the thud, this foolish hare jumped to the conclusion that the earth was coming to an end. His fear is the cause of all this confusion.'

So he reassured all the animals and said, "I will take the hare to the exact spot and find out whether the earth is really breaking up. Meanwhile all of you must remain here. Until I return no one is to move or spread panic." Then, placing the hare on his back, he sprang forward and proceeded towards the palm grove near the ocean.

The Bodhisattva gently set down the hare in the grove and said, "Come, show me the spot."

"I dare not", said the hare in a frightened voice.

But the lion urged him and assured that no harm would come to him. So the hare showed him the palm sapling under which he had heard the sound. The lion examined the place and saw the ripe *bel* fruit that had fallen on the palm leaf. He looked around and found no traces of any earthquake. Placing the hare on his back once again, he hurried back to the forest and approached the assembled beasts. He told them what had happened and their fears were dispelled. The confusion came to an end and peace descended upon the forest.

Indeed, had it not been for the Bodhisattva, those innumerable animals would have blindly rushed to their death. It was because of the Bodhisattva's wisdom that they were saved.

DADDABHA JATAKA

The Sacrificial Goat

THERE was once a Brahmin, well-versed in the Vedas and renowned as a teacher. One day he had a munda to offer a

ceremonial feast for his departed ancestors. So he fetched a goat and said to his pupils, "My sons, take this goat to the river and bathe him. Then adorn him with flowers, put a wreath round his neck and bring him back."

"Very good", said the pupils, and did what they were told. When the goat was being bathed and adorned, he became conscious of his past lives and suddenly realised that on that very day he would be freed from all misery and obtain final liberation. At this thought the goat felt so happy that he laughed loudly. But a few moments later he thought of the Brahmin who was about to kill him. The fate that was in store for the Brahmin moved the goat to pity and he began to weep.

The pupils were struck with wonder at this strange sight. They said, "Oh worthy goat, your voice was loud both in joy and in sorrow. Why did you laugh and why did you weep?"

The goat said, "Ask me your question in the presence of your master." So the pupils took the goat to their master and told him what had happened. After hearing their story, the master asked the goat why he laughed and wept at the same time. At this the goat recalled his past deeds and spoke thus:

"In one of my past existences I, too, was a Brahmin. I knew the mystic texts of the Vedas and at a feast for the dead offered a goat, as you are preparing to do. Through killing that single goat I had my head cut off four hundred and ninety-nine times. This is my five-hundredth birth, and it is the last. As soon as you kill me I shall be liberated for ever. That is why I laughed."

The Brahmin said, "Well, I now understand why you laughed. But I am still waiting to hear why you wept."

"Oh Brahmin", said the goat, "do you think I wept for myself? No, my friend, I wept for *you*. The penalty for killing a goat is the same for you as it was for me. I pity you, because by taking my life you are condemning yourself to have your head cut off five hundred times."

The Brahmin was terrified at these words and said,

"Do not be afraid I shall not kill you."

"That makes no difference to me, Brahmin Whether you kill me or not, death will visit me today "

"Oh no, friend goat You must not entertain such fears I shall go with you and guard you all the time "

"Weak is your protection, and strong is the force of my deeds", said the goat

The goat was set at liberty The Brahmin and his disciples followed him closely After a while, as the goat was browsing in a bush near a rock, a thunderbolt killed him on the spot

In those days the Bodhisattva was living as a tree-divinity at that very spot While a large crowd was looking at the goat, the Bodhisattva seated himself in mid-air by his supernatural power Then in a sweet voice he addressed the assembled crowd and recited these lines

If only men knew that existence is pain,
Living beings would cease from taking life
Beware, beware ! stern is the slayer's doom

And the people, who heard this truth preached by the Great Being, gave up taking life They spent their lives in charity and good works so that in the end they attained to the City of the Gods

MATAKABHATTA JATAKA

The Value of a Brother

ONCE, in the country of Kosala, three men were ploughing their field at the edge of a forest Now, this forest was infested by robbers and many travellers had been plundered by them Some of the victims came upon the farmers and thought that they were robbers in disguise Their mind was full of suspicion and the more they pondered the more

convinced they became that the three men were merely pretending to plough the fields. The poor husbandmen were marched off into the king's presence.

After a while a woman came to the king pleading for the prisoners. She declared that they were innocent and, weeping and wailing, prayed for their release. The king asked in what way the three prisoners were related to her. She said that one of them was her husband, one her brother, and the third was her son.

The king was moved by her entreaties and said, "Well, I am not sure that any of them deserves to be set at liberty. But as a mark of favour I shall release one of them. Which one will you choose?"

After a moment's thought the woman said, "Sir, I want all three of them back. But if I *must* make a choice, I would rather request you to release my brother."

The king was surprised by her choice. He asked her why she preferred a brother to a son. Was not a mother's love stronger than a sister's? And, leaving aside this comparison, was it not her duty, as a loyal wife, to think of her husband before any one else?

The woman replied, "Your Majesty, to me it seems clear that a brother is, among all my relations, the most priceless treasure. If I live, it is not impossible that I should get another husband, even though at the moment I am too much distraught to think about it. And if I get another husband, it is not impossible that I might get another son. But alas, who can give me another brother, now that my parents are dead? So please release my brother."

The king was struck by the woman's intelligence and released all three of them.

The Porter's Anxiety

ONCE upon a time there was a wicked king named Mahapīṅgala. His sins were many and all his actions unjust. In all things he saw only his own pleasure and the gratification of his will. He taxed and fined, robbed and mutilated until his subjects were crushed to pulp as sugar-cane is crushed in a mill. Mahapīṅgala was cruel, fierce and without a grain of pity. At home he was harsh and implacable towards his wives, his children and his advisers. He was a source of irritation to all men, like a speck of dust in the eyes, like sand in a dish of soup, like a thorn sticking in the heel.

Now, as it happened, the Bodhisattva was born as a son of King Mahapīṅgala. After continuing his iniquitous reign for many years, the king died, and the Bodhisattva succeeded him. The citizens were overjoyed at the death of Mahapīṅgala. The sound of laughter was heard on every side. The people burnt the king's body with a thousand cartloads of wood and poured a thousand jars of water on the embers. Then they broadcast their rejoicing in the streets by beat of drum. The city was decked out with flags and banners. At every doorstep a pavilion was set up where parched corn and flowers were scattered. People sat upon decorated platforms under fine canopies. There were feasts in every house. The Bodhisattva himself sat upon a fine divan on a raised dais. His dress was magnificent, and a white parasol was raised above him. The courtiers and householders, the citizens and the serving-folk, all stood around their new king.

But, while everyone else rejoiced, one of the doorkeepers sighed and sobbed, as though he were in great grief. The Bodhisattva observed him and said, "My good friend, all the people are happy because my father is dead. You alone stand there weeping. Come, now, tell me the truth, Was my father particularly kind to you?" And after putting this question he recited these lines

Cruel to all men was Mahapingala
 Dead is he now and all are free to breathe
 Was he, the yellow-eyed, so very dear to you?
 Tell us, oh porter, why you mourn so loud

The porter replied, "Far from it, Sir I do not weep through sorrow. Indeed, my head has every reason to rejoice, for King Mahapingala gave me eight blows on the head with his fist every time he came down from his palace or went up to it. And they were hard blows too, as from a blacksmith's hammer. My fear is this. When the king goes down to the other world he will deliver eight blows on the head of Yama, the Lord of hell. This he will do through sheer habit. But Yama, frightened by his cruelty, will refuse to keep him in hell. He will come back to the palace and hit me on the head again. That is why I weep." And, having said this, the porter recited these lines

How could Mahapingala to me be dear?
 I am scared only by the thought of his safe return
 Alas, he will beat poor Yama on his head,
 I fear that Yama may send him back to us

Having understood the reason why the porter wept, the Bodhisattva tried to console him. "Do not be afraid, my man", he said. "Mahapingala will not return. He has been burnt with a thousand cartloads of firewood. The burning-place has been soaked with water from a thousand pitchers. And the ground has been dug up on all sides. Beings who go to the other world, otherwise than by re-birth, do not come back in their old bodily shape. So you must cheer up and stop crying."

At this the porter felt reassured and took comfort

The Fatal Charm

LONG, long ago, when Brahmadaṭṭa was the king of Banaras, a learned Brahmin lived in a certain village. This Brahmin had knowledge of many things, but his most precious possession was the secret of a charm called Vedabbha. This charm, repeated at a particular conjunction of the planets, brought forth from the sky a shower of several priceless things—gold, silver, pearl, coral, diamond, ruby.

In those days the Bodhisattva was living in the kingdom of Banaras as a pupil of this Brahmin. One day the master left the village and travelled to the country of Chetti for some business, taking the Bodhisattva with him. On the way they had to pass through a forest. In this forest lived five hundred robbers who had made travel impossible in the region. They were ruthless, and had earned the title of the *despatchers* because, whenever they caught two persons, they detained one of them and *despatched* the other to collect the ransom. If they captured a father and son they imprisoned the son and sent the father for ransom. Among mother and daughter they sent the mother, among two brothers they sent the elder one, and among a master and disciple they sent the disciple.

As soon as the Bodhisattva and his master reached the forest, the robbers seized them. In accordance with their practice they made the Brahmin their prisoner and sent the Bodhisattva for money. Before leaving, the pupil bowed respectfully and said, "Sir, banish fear from your mind. Rest assured that I shall come back with the money in a day or two. But I beseech you to remember one thing. Today the planets will be in the desired conjunction for repeating the Vedabbha charm. Do not, Sir, yield to temptation. If you repeat the charm and call forth a shower of the priceless things, disaster will fall upon all of us including the robbers."

Having uttered these words of warning, the Bodhisattva went away to secure the money with which he could rescue

his master At the hour of sunset the robbers tied up the Brahmin with a stout cord and threw him on the ground As he lay there he saw the full moon slowly climbing over the eastern horizon At this sight the Brahmin, realising that the heavenly bodies were in a favourable combination, became agitated and impatient 'Why should I endure this agony', he thought, 'when I can so easily earn my freedom? All I have to do is to repeat the Vedabbha charm, obtain the wealth which the robbers want, and go home a free man'

Having made up his mind the Brahmin called out to the robbers When they came near him he asked, "Friends, will you please tell me why I have been made prisoner?" They said, "Respected Sir, we have detained you for ransom" "Well", said the Brahmin, "If that is all you want, untie me and be quick about it I shall get for you all the wealth that you crave Bathe my head, dress me in new clothes, sprinkle perfumed water on me and adorn me with flowers Then leave me alone" The robbers did exactly as they were told Carefully observing the position of the planets, the Brahmin lifted his eyes to the sky and repeated the charm Treasure poured down immediately The robbers picked up their newly acquired wealth, wrapped it into bundles and hurried away, while the Brahmin followed them at some distance

Now, as luck would have it, a second band of five hundred robbers came that way and attacked the first The newcomers were victorious When they began to imprison the robbers who had secured the treasure, the captives cried out, "Friends, why do you seize us? If you are after wealth, get hold of that Brahmin It was from him that we have acquired this treasure He has miraculous powers Merely by gazing at the sky he caused a rain of riches" So the second band of robbers let their captives go, caught hold of the Brahmin, and roughly ordered him to procure riches for them The Brahmin said, "Gentlemen, I should have been delighted to help you But my charm works only at a particular conjunction of the planets

It will be a year before such a conjunction occurs again, and if you very kindly wait until then I shall certainly invoke for you a shower of wealth "

When the robbers heard this they were infuriated. They shouted, "Scoundrel! You made our predecessors rich instantly. But you want *us* to wait a whole year." And with these words they slashed the Brahmin with a sharp sword, cut him in two, and flung his body on the road. Then they pursued the first band of robbers and, after killing them all, seized the treasure. But very soon they quarreled among themselves about the division of the booty. Two groups were formed, and they fought and slew each other until the groups became smaller and smaller. Eventually, only two of the robbers were left alive.

The two survivors carried off the treasure and concealed it in the forest near a village. One of them, sword in hand, sat guarding the treasure while the other went to the village for provisions. The man who stayed behind reflected, 'What a nuisance! The moment he gets back he will demand half the treasure. It would be better to destroy him as soon as he returns.' With these thoughts he drew his sword and waited for his partner.

Meanwhile the other man had been thinking on similar lines and was equally eager to have the treasure all to himself. So, after he had cooked the rice, he ate his own share and put a deadly poison in the rest. But he had hardly set down the dish of poisoned rice when his partner, taking him unawares, struck him with his sword and killed him on the spot. The survivor hid the murdered man's body in a secluded spot. Then he ate the rice. The poison took effect and within a few moments he was dead. Thus for the sake of the treasure not only did the Brahmin lose his life but a thousand robbers also perished.

After a day or two the Bodhisattva came with the ransom. As he did not find his master where he had last seen him, and as there was no trace of the robbers, he guessed the sequence of events. After a while, proceeding along the forest road, he saw his master's body cut in two pieces by

a sword "Alas", cried the Bodhisattva, "My master did not heed my warning and perished" Then he gathered some dry sticks and, making a pyre, cremated his master's body A few wild flowers were the only offering he could secure for the ritual

Further along the road he came upon the five hundred *despatchers* and a little further still he met two hundred and fifty, and so on until at last he came to the corpses of the last two robbers He found the bundles of treasure, and near one of the robbers he saw an overturned rice-bowl

The Bodhisattva understood the whole story and reflected 'Through not following my advice the self-willed Brahmin has brought destruction not only upon himself but upon a thousand others Truly, those who seek their gain through mistaken means shall reap disaster Even as my master's misguided effort in causing the rain of treasure brought so much destruction, so also shall every man, who seeks advantage through wrong means, utterly perish and bring ruin upon others as well'

The forest echoed with the Bodhisattva's words The tree-divinities applauded him when he uttered the truth Returning home, the Bodhisattva lived out his term of life in the exercise of charity and other good works

And when the span of his existence came to an end, he departed to the heaven that his deeds had won

VEDA B B H A J A T A K A

The Panchatantra

THERE are several versions of the Panchatantra. They all go back to a common original, which is irrevocably lost. This original version perhaps belongs to Kashmir, it is possible that the stories were composed in their present form some time between the second and the fourth centuries, and the author was probably Vishnusharman. That is all that the scholars can tell us!

Centuries ago the Panchatantra stories had already passed into universal currency. Age after age, and in every part of the world, they have brought delight to old and young alike. What is the secret of this unrivalled popularity? The answer is that no other book in the world contains so much practical wisdom, offered in such a palatable form, and expressed with such subtle understanding of the aesthetic as well as the psychological requirements of human nature.

The Panchatantra is not meant for ascetics. It presumes that all-round happiness, here and now, is the central aim of life. But happiness is not a fruit that is easily plucked. You have to struggle for it. Unflagging effort, coupled with wit and resourcefulness, leads to success.

such is the theme of the Panchatantra. The importance of wealth and powerful friends is not overlooked. In fact the Panchatantra may justly be described as the first treatise ever written on 'How to Win Friends and Influence People'. Nevertheless, you cannot pull off anything really decisive merely with the help of money or friends in high office. In the last resort it is a combination of ingenuity and unremitting toil that counts. Life, as actually lived, is not always edifying. The Panchatantra faces this fact squarely. As Sthirajit, Chief Counsellor to the king of Crows, points out, the world is full of unscrupulous people, and piety does not always protect us from them. Good deeds are seldom appreciated. Ingratitude dogs our footsteps. We are surrounded by chicanery, artifice, and pretence. The Panchatantra therefore recommends shrewdness, realism and freedom from excessive sentimentality.

And yet, although it portrays the seamy side of life, the Panchatantra does not preach cynicism. On the contrary, the path of honesty is declared to be the most proper and dependable course. As the frog Gangadatta says "A muddy garment soils every other object with which the wearer comes into contact. Likewise, when one virtue is abandoned all others gradually desert us."

But the Panchatantra shows us that a virtuous man need not be a simpleton, and that our actions can be reasonably meritorious without being tiresome!

The Panchatantra

IN the southern country there once ruled a great king named Amarashakti. Many monarchs recognized his overlordship and bowed before his might. King Amarashakti was not merely powerful, he was also wise, learned and intelligent. He was well-versed in all the arts and familiar with all the principles of practical conduct.

Blessed with so much renown, wealth, ability and virtue the king should have considered himself a very happy man. But he had, unfortunately, one great source of sorrow. All his three sons were utter imbeciles.

For a long time the king endured his anxiety and disappointment, hoping that in course of time the princes would overcome their stupidity. At last one day he summoned his advisers and said, "Gentlemen, as you all know, my sons are supreme idiots. They have neither common-sense nor discernment. Between them and education there seems to be a rooted hostility. When I see them, my kingdom no longer brings me any joy. It has been said that sons are of three kinds—those not yet born, those that are dead and those that are fools. Well, among these the unborn and the dead are very much to be preferred. They may cause grief for a limited period, but fools bring us sorrow throughout life. To beget a son who turns out to be a dunce is like buying a cow who neither bears a calf nor yields milk. I beseech you, gentlemen, to ponder over my problem. You must think of some method of awakening in my sons a spark of intelligence."

The advisers suggested different solutions, but they carried no conviction to the king. The sciences and the arts recommended by them for the princes, as a necessary preparation for the awakening of intelligence, would have demanded years and years of study. The king was on the verge of despair, but one of the advisers held out hope. He said, "Your Majesty, life is short and the sciences involve much time. What we need is some kind of a precis containing, so to say, the essence of all wisdom and intelligence. We must pick out the fundamental facts and separate them from the subsidiaries, as swans extract pure milk from a mixture of milk and water. Now, there is only one man capable of preparing such an epitome of wisdom. That man is Vishnusharman. Let us entrust the princes to his care. I am sure he will make them intelligent."

Accordingly the king sent for Vishnusharman. When he arrived, the king said, "Sir, you will be doing me a great favour by teaching my sons the art of practical life. In return you shall have the revenue of a hundred villages." The Brahmin replied, "Listen, Oh King! I am not in the habit of selling learning for monetary gain. Besides, I have no use for money. I have attained a ripe old age and objects of desire no longer hold out a charm for me. So let us forget about the revenue from a hundred villages. But I shall be happy to take charge of your sons. And if I do not make them, within a period of six months, masters of the art of intelligent living, I shall give up my own name."

The king was relieved to hear Vishnusharman's categorical promise. The boys were handed over to him and he took them home. There he taught them the five books of stories in which the essence of worldly wisdom was compressed. Having learned these stories the princes became thoroughly conversant with all the arts of life. At the end of six months they returned to the Palace cured of their imbecility, much to the delight of their royal father.

BOOK ONE

Disruption of Friendship

ONCE there was a city called Mahilaropya. Its buildings were magnificent, their walls and spires rose into the sky like the mighty Himalayas. In this city, populous and overflowing with wealth, there lived a merchant named Vardhamana. He was a virtuous man and, through hard work, accumulated a vast fortune. Once, pondering over his possessions, he reflected 'Though money is abundant, it should be increased. What is unearned should be earned, what is earned should be preserved, what is preserved should be expanded, what is expanded should be profitably invested. I must therefore set out and strive to multiply my wealth.'

And so, collecting a large stock of merchandise, he said farewell to his parents and took the road to Mathura. He was accompanied by trusted servants, and his cart was drawn by two powerful bulls named Nandaka and Sanjivaka. By and by the merchant and his followers reached a dense forest. It was cool and shady, full of restful caves and thickets, abounding in bubbling streams. But it was also the haunt of tigers, bears and other ferocious animals. While they were passing through this forest, the bull Sanjivaka slipped at a muddy spot and sank upon the ground. Overcome by the weight of the wagon, he was unable to rise and suffered great pain. The merchant halted for five nights, but when the poor bull did not recover he left him in charge of servants with a supply of fodder and proceeded towards his destination. In a day or two the servants, scared by the perils that lurked in the forest, abandoned Sanjivaka and journeyed to Mathura. They made a false report to their master "Poor Sanjivaka died", they said, "So we performed the last rites and came away. What a pity! He was such a fine animal."

Meanwhile Sanjivaka managed to raise himself up and

hobbled to the bank of the Yamuna. There he browsed on the young shoots of grass and drank his fill from the river. Within a few days he grew plump and vigorous. Full of energy, and high-humped like Nandi, the bull of Lord Siva, he romped about with supreme unconcern.

One day a lion named Pingalaka came to the Yamuna's bank and heard the bull bellowing loudly. The sound was unlike anything he had ever heard, and the lion was sorely troubled. Concealing his panic he lay down under a mighty banyan tree and sent for all his retainers. Pingalaka had never experienced any restraint, he had ruled with absolute power and was a stranger to caution and fear alike. He was a lion, and a lion needs no anointing. Nature herself had crowned him king. But now for the first time he was stricken with fear.

Among the innumerable animals in Pingalaka's train, there were two jackals named Karataka and Damanaka. They were sons of former counsellors but were at that time out of employment. Damanaka detected a change in the king's expression and guessed that something was amiss. "My dear Karataka", he said to his friend, "just look at our master. Why does he suddenly look so shaken up?" Karataka said, "Why should we meddle? Wise people keep to their own affairs. The two of us pick up enough out of the master's leavings. Let's be content."

But Damanaka was not satisfied. "After all", he said, "food is not everything. We must strive for distinction. Even a crow can fill his belly so long as he has a beak. Dogs wag their tails and roll at their masters' feet for scraps of food. But elephants have so much self-esteem that they have to be coaxed into eating."

"Anyway", said Karataka, "we are out of jobs. We have no standing at court. So what can we do?"

"Don't be such a pessimist, my dear fellow. The holder of a job may be fired, and a jobless fellow may acquire a position of trust if he has real worth. I know how to make myself useful. I have carefully studied Vyasa's account of how clever people behave at the court. I understand

the duties of a shrewd functionary I know that through sheer physical proximity I can obtain royal favour, for kings, like maidens and creepers, cling to their nearest neighbours I know when to keep silent and when to answer "

Karataka said, "Well, if you have made up your mind, by all means go and speak to the king I wish you luck " And so Damanaka went to meet Pingalaka When the king saw him approach, he said to the guard, "Enough of your formalities Admit him without ceremony Damanaka is an old acquaintance and a counsellor's son " So the jackal entered the inner enclosure and respectfully sat down at the place indicated to him The king greeted him with his formidable right paw and said, "It is ages since you were last seen I do hope you have been in good health " Damanaka said, "Sir, we are the ancestral servants of your dynasty In times of need we come forward Even a straw may serve a king to scratch an ear or to pick a tooth But when speech and action are required the king has to count upon his loyal followers I may be a mere jackal but you will not depise me for that Silk comes from worms, gold from stones, gems from hoods of snakes, and the lotus thrives in mud "

"My good fellow, have I ever despised you ? You are an old retainer Now tell me what has brought you here "

"Your Majesty set out to enjoy a drink at the Yamuna Why did you suddenly return and camp under this tree ?"

"For no particular reason, my friend "

"Of course, if it is a state secret I shall not say another word A king has to be circumspect "

At this Pingalaka reflected 'The fellow seems trustworthy One must share one's fears with an honest servant or a faithful friend I think I should take him into confidence ' And so, lowering his voice, he asked, "Damanaka, did you hear a peculiar sound coming from the bank of the river ?"

"Yes, master, I did But what of it ?"

"I am thinking of leaving this forest on account of this

strange voice I think some prodigious creature has come here The place is no longer safe ”

“What ! Is Your Majesty frightened by a mere voice? All kinds of sounds are heard here We hear the thunder of clouds, the wind rustling among the reeds, drums, noisy carts, temple-bells and so many other noises You cannot abruptly leave this forest which was won by your ancestors and has been in the family estate for generations Remain on the spot until I find out what sort of a creature he is ”

When Damanaka was gone, Pingalaka repented his haste ‘I think it was a mistake’, he thought, ‘to have trusted him to the point of revealing my fears The fellow has been out of job for some time, and unemployment breeds bitterness He may betray me to my new enemy ’ Meanwhile Damanaka followed the direction of the sound and came close to the bull, who was grunting through sheer contentment “Well, well”, chuckled Damanaka, “so it is nothing more dangerous than a bull ! This is lucky for me I can now have the king in my power by feeding his fears A man restored to health no longer needs a drug , and a king relieved of worry no longer needs a counsellor ” So when he returned to Pingalaka he pulled a long face and looked very grim “I managed to see the creature”, he said with a dubious expression

“Really ? Are you telling me the truth ?”

“How could I dare to make a false report ? Besides, it is a sin to lie to the king Sages have declared that the king is greater than all the Gods to his subjects The Gods pay for good or ill after a lifetime But the king pays at once ”

“All right, all right, I suppose you did really see him Is he really very formidable ?”

“Why waste words ? Formidable or not, I shall somehow manage to bring him into your presence ”

The lion was happy, and Damanaka went back to the river-bank Approaching Sanjivaka he said, with great show of anger, “Come here, you impudent bull How dare you keep up this stupid bellowing ? My master Pingalaka

is annoyed with you " Sanjivaka asked, "My friend, who is this Pingalaka ?"

"What ! You don't know who my master is ? Just wait, you will soon learn My master lives under a banyan tree not far from here He is a mighty lion, lord over all life "

The very mention of a lion threw Sanjivaka into panic He considered himself as good as dead When he recovered speech, he pleaded with the jackal to intercede with his master on his behalf, so that a safe-conduct may be granted to him Damanaka promised to try and went back to Pingalaka "Oh master", he said, "that creature is not an ordinary bull He has served as the vehicle of Siva himself And he claims that this forest has been given to him as a playground "

"Alas ! My worst fears have come true", said the lion "Only through the special favour of the Gods can creatures wander in the forest thundering like that Now what shall we do ?"

"Don't worry, Sir", said Damanaka, "I have told the bull that you are the vehicle of Parvati and that the forest is your domain as well as his Furthermore, I have invited him as a guest He will come and befriend you But he has asked for a safe-conduct It is for you to judge whether you should grant it "

Pingalaka was delighted "Excellent, my dear fellow", he said, "that was most intelligent of you Of course I grant him a safe-conduct You must now bring him here as quickly as possible , but remember, he too has to bind himself by oath not to do me harm " So Damanaka went back once again to Sanjivaka and said, "Well, I have persuaded my master to grant you a safe-conduct You may come with me without anxiety But you have to act in agreement with me And don't take on airs By and by we shall both enjoy wealth and power I am a king's retainer, and you must know that it does not pay to behave haughtily towards royal retainers Don't forget the story of the merchant Vajradanta "

"I have never heard of the merchant Vajradanta", said Sanjivaka "What happened to him?"

"I shall tell you", said Damanaka, and he related this story

The Servant's Revenge

IN a certain prosperous city there once lived a merchant named Vajradanta. He had a vast private business and also handled the royal finances. He was so clever that he managed to gain popularity at the court as well as with the common people. He had a knack of reconciling contrary interests and making himself indispensable to all parties.

Now one day the merchant gave a big feast to celebrate his daughter's wedding. He invited the king, the ministers and all the prominent citizens. When the banquet was over, he regaled them with gifts and escorted the king back to the palace. When the party reached the palace, the merchant discovered one of the king's domestics, a man called Vrishabha, comfortably seated at a prominent place. He hastened to catch hold of the impudent fellow and drove him out of the hall. From that moment Vrishabha vowed vengeance against the merchant. He was restless all the time and sought an opportunity to harm the man who had humiliated him.

Early one morning, as the king lay half awake, Vrishabha was sweeping the room. When he approached the king's bed he muttered, "What a shameless fellow this merchant is! How dare he make love to the queen!" The king was startled. He jumped out of bed and said, "What nonsense have you been talking, Vrishabha? What is all this about the queen and Vajradanta?"

Pretending to be confused, Vrishabha said, "Forgive me, Your Majesty. I was awake all night and so I am feeling very drowsy. I do not know what I said. Please give no thought to the matter."

But the king's suspicions were aroused. He reflected 'After all, such a remark cannot be altogether accidental

This man has free entrance to my palace Vajradanta, too, comes and goes at his will Perhaps the servant has actually seen him caressing my queen Who can be sure of a woman's faithfulness?' The more he pondered the more convinced he became that Vrishabha had blurted out the truth He withdrew his favour from Vajradanta and no longer invited him to the court The merchant was baffled by the king's sudden indifference One day, however, Vrishabha mocked him in the presence of other servants "Be careful, my friends", he said "This merchant is one of the king's great favourites He can arrest anyone he wants Don't offend him, otherwise he will box your ears as he boxed mine" And with these words he laughed loudly

The mystery now became clear to Vajradanta He reflected 'So, it was Vrishabha's doing Well, I was foolish to have offended him A servant, however base he may be, can always get his vanity satisfied if he is sufficiently close to the monarch' He went home in deep dejection and pondered how he might regain the king's favour At last he apologized to the servant and presented him with two garments of silk Vrishabha's vanity was flattered "All right, I forgive you", he said, "I shall soon restore you to the king's favour"

Next morning Vrishabha again pretended to be drowsy while he was sweeping the king's bedchamber "How intelligent our king is", he muttered, "While taking his bath he eats cucumbers" The king was amazed when he heard this remark "What is all this piffle, Vrishabha?", he said with great annoyance "It is only because you have served me for many years that I am sparing you Otherwise such a remark would have cost you your life Have you ever seen me eating cucumbers in the bath-room?"

Vrishabha fell at the king's feet "Forgive me, Oh king!", he said with great show of fear "I did not get a wink of sleep last night My head is reeling I do not know what I muttered Please don't give it a moment's thought"

At this the King began to wonder whether he had not been unjust to the poor merchant He reflected 'This

imbecile has been talking utter nonsense about me. What he said about Vajradanta must be equally nonsensical. I should not have shown disfavour to the poor man. How could he have caressed the queen? He is a respectable man and can never be guilty of such misconduct. Moreover, since his downfall the city's business has suffered.' And so he summoned Vajradanta, loaded him with presents, and restored him to favour.

* * *

Having related the story of Vajradanta, Damanaka said, "So you see that a king's servant cannot be trifled with. You will have to do as I say." Sanjivaka replied, "Of course, my dear friend. How can I ever go against your wishes?"

Damanaka led the bull to his master and, having introduced them to each other, retired. After exchanging civilities, Sanjivaka described how he had been stranded in the forest. Pingalaka listened with interest and said, "You must now remain here without the slightest fear. My paws will protect you from all dangers. We shall enjoy many amusements together." And then, for the first time in many days, the lion went to the Yamuna's bank with a light heart. He drank his fill and bathed in the cool water. Then he roamed about in the forest, carefree as in former days. As time passed, the lion and the bull became intimate friends. A lively affection sprang up between them. Sanjivaka, who had studied many authoritative works on the subject of conduct and statesmanship, began to give lessons to his new comrade. The lion's wits were sharpened and he gratefully imbibed the education offered to him. Gradually he was weaned away from forest ways, became urbane, and acquired much refinement.

Indeed, Sanjivaka and Pingalaka spent so much time in each other's company that other animals were kept at a distance. With the lion's prowess lulled into inaction through the joys of friendship, very little hunting was done. Soon there was acute shortage of food. As for Damanaka,

he was completely forgotten. No longer did he have right of entry into the king's inner circle. Pinched with hunger, he bemoaned his lot in the company of his friend Karataka. "Alas, my friend", he said, "You have been proved right. Meddling has done us no good. Now our king takes so much delight in Sanjivaka's company that he does not give a thought to his own followers."

Karataka said, "Yes, we are in a spot all right. In introducing this grass-eater to the king you have been playing with fire. Now what are you going to do?"

"I must devise some method of separating the two friends. It is my duty, as a loyal servant, to save the king from his excessive fondness for the bull."

"That is easier said than done. Have you the power to detach the king from this outsider?"

"Power is not everything. Sometimes shrewdness is enough, however difficult the goal may be. Let us remember how the crow killed the dreadful snake."

Karataka said that he had not heard the story of the crow and the snake, so Damanaka narrated it.

The Crow and the Snake

Once a crow and his wife made their nest on one of the lower branches of a huge banyan tree. By and by they became deeply attached to their home, and made it cosy and comfortable in every way. But their happiness did not last very long. A black snake took up his residence among the roots of the tree. He started crawling through the hollow trunk and eating their chicks as quickly as they were born.

When the crow and his wife had lost many of their young ones, the idea of leaving their nest was discussed between them. The crow-hen said to her husband, "My dear, how long will you allow my children to be devoured by that horrible snake? Let us make our home elsewhere." But the crow fell into depression at the thought of abandoning his nest. "We have lived here a long time", he said. "How

can we leave this place? After all it is our home We should rather think of destroying our enemy "

"But the enemy is cunning and powerful How can you hurt him?"

"I may not have the power to kill him, but I have wise friends who have mastered all the works on diplomacy and warfare They will show me a way out "

With these words the crow went to seek the guidance of one of his dear friends, a jackal After relating the cause of his sorrow the crow said, "My friend, you must come to our rescue My wife and myself are dying of grief at the thought of our dear little ones, so cruelly swallowed up by the black snake "

"Do not worry", said the jackal, "There is an easy way out of your trouble You must somehow get hold of a gold chain or necklace belonging to some king or wealthy nobleman Then you should deposit the chain in the snake's home The rest will be easy "

Acting upon the jackal's advice the crow and his wife began to fly far and wide looking for a rich man's establishment or a royal camp By and by they came to a pool where the women of the king's court were disporting themselves They had taken off their jewels and laid them on the bank Seizing her opportunity the crow-hen pounced upon one of the gold chains and picked it up with her beak Then the crow and his wife hurried back homeward, pursued by the king's servants and soldiers The crow-hen dropped the chain in the snakepit and watched

The king's men, searching the tree with great thoroughness, discovered the hole They explored the hole with their sticks until the snake came out with swollen hood The soldiers killed the snake with their clubs, recovered the chain, and returned to the camp

And after that the crow and his wife lived peacefully in the home that they loved so much

* * *

Damanaka continued, "You can thus see, my friend, that

force alone does not always decide The story of the crow and the snake shows us what a clever device can achieve But even more revealing is the story of the rabbit and the lion It happened like this "

The Rabbit Who Outwitted a Lion

There was once a lion named Bhasuraka He was proud of his strength and killed the animals of the forest without mercy So one day all the animals met in a conference and decided to approach the lion with a proposal "Oh, king", they said, "please do not kill us indiscriminately Think of the other world It is sinful to take life in excess of your needs We propose that you remain at home and one animal be sent to you every day to satisfy your hunger In this way your sustenance will continue and our families, too, will not be rooted out A cow must not be milked every hour, but only in the morning Remember that the loss of his subjects is also the king's loss Have mercy, then, and accept our suggestion "

The lion said, "Gentlemen, your words are quite convincing I accept the arrangement But remember, if an animal does not come to me every day I shall destroy you all at a single stroke " And so the animals began to roam the woods without fear, choosing one among them to serve as the King's meal every day The different species sent their members by turns, selecting an individual who had become old, or indifferent to life through religious feelings

One day it was the turn of the rabbits The rabbit selected happened to be a plucky and clever fellow Instead of going to his death meekly he made up his mind to try his wits and lead the lion to destruction So he lingered on the way and deliberately arrived in the lion's presence several hours after the appointed time The King was in a rage, vowing to exterminate all the animals the first thing next morning

The rabbit approached at a leisurely pace, bowed low, and stood before the lion Bhasuraka thundered, "So,

you are supposed to be my dinner ! Measly thing, you are no more than a single morsel to me And you dare to keep me waiting for hours ! Is that how the animals keep their agreement ? I shall kill every single one of them ”

The rabbit said with great show of respect, “Master, the fault is not mine, nor are the other animals to blame Something unexpected happened ”

“What happened ? Tell me quickly, while you are still outside my jaws ”

“Master, as you see I am too small to satisfy your appetite That is why five other rabbits were sent along with me We were all coming here at the appointed time, but a lion emerged from a big hole under the ground and stopped us ‘Where are you going,’ he asked On our replying he said, ‘Pray to your family deity I want to eat you ’ We replied, ‘You have no right to eat us We are the dinner of Bhasuraka, our mighty king ’ At this he jeered at us and said, ‘This forest belongs to me Bhasuraka is a thief Bring him here at once and I shall show you who is the master ’ And so he detained my comrades, sending me to you with his challenge That is why, Oh King, I could not come in time ”

“Who is this rascal ?” said Bhasuraka, “Lead me to him at once I shall have no peace of mind until I drive him away ”

The rabbit said, “Quite so A true warrior brooks no insult But you must be cautious This fellow lives in a fortress And a single fortress is equal in might to a thousand elephants ”

“I don’t care where he hides I shall kill him all the same An enemy must be destroyed at once He must never be permitted to grow ”

“Very well But it was my duty to warn you of your enemy’s strength You must not underestimate him ”

“What business is it of yours, you imp ? Show me this fortress ”

Thereupon the rabbit led Bhasuraka to a deep well and said, “Master, your very approach has terrified the thief He has crawled into his hole You can see him if you peep into it ”



The Blue Jackal

The lion peeped into the well and saw his own reflection in the water. Fool that he was, he mistook the reflection for a real lion and roared loudly. The sound re-issued from the well with redoubled loudness. At this Bhasuraka was mad with anger, hurled himself upon his imaginary rival, and met his death. The rabbit carried the happy news to the animals, who thereafter lived contentedly in the forest.

* * *

Karataka, having listened to the story of the rabbit's cleverness, said, "Don't you think, my friend, that this is an exceptional case? I still hold that a person of feeble powers should not try to be tricky with great people."

Damanaka retorted, "Feeble or strong, one must take determined action when the occasion demands it. The Gods are on the side of those who are vigorous in their efforts."

And so, determined to retrieve his position, Damanaka again went to meet Pingalaka. The King welcomed him and asked him what he wanted. Damanaka answered, "Master, I bring tidings that are important, though unpleasant. No devoted attendant likes to carry bad news, and yet loyalty demands that the truth must be told, so that immediate action may be taken."

"Come, come, my good fellow", said Pingalaka, "What is all this about?"

"Oh King, prepare yourself for a shock. This fellow, Sanjivaka, has gained your confidence for treacherous ends. He has been examining your strength and weakness, your advisers and material resources. His plan is to kill you and seize royal power for himself. And I have reason to believe that he is intending to carry out his design very soon. That is why I have hastened here to warn you."

This report came to Pingalaka like a bolt from the blue. For a while he was sunk in stupor and did not say a word. Damanaka, pretending to be in great distress, said, "Alas, how difficult and depressing is a counsellor's task. With what sadness he must discharge his duty! Your Majesty,

do you not see that Sanjivaka already manages state affairs without any restraint? He is only waiting for the final step "

"But why should he change so suddenly? Moreover, even if he has changed, I cannot consider him to be my enemy. Once dear is always dear, even if there are signs of fickleness. Our bodies may become decrepit, but we cling to them all the same. And similarly our heart clings to a loved one, even if his actions are improper "

"Yes, it does. That is why it is so difficult to get on in the world. But a wise person, and especially a wise king, must abandon a traitor, dear though he be. Let us remember the song that the women sing 'What is the good of golden ear-rings, if they lacerate your ears?' Towards a person such as Sanjivaka, pity is out of place. I must speak out, though truth is seldom flattering. A king should never leave tried servants and hearken to strangers "

By this time Pingalaka's confidence in his friend had already become shaky. "When he appeared as a suppliant", he said, "I gave him safe-conduct. How can he prove ungrateful?" But Damanaka retorted, "A rogue does not ask a reason before he shows hostility. You may feed a dog on dainties, but you cannot straighten his tail. It is no use offering perfume to a corpse. It is a waste of energy to plant lotuses in dry earth. Never trust an ungrateful fellow, otherwise you will repent, like the Brahmin who rescued the goldsmith "

Pingalaka said he had never heard the story. So Damanaka narrated it.

The Goldsmith's Ingratitude

There was once a Brahmin named Tyaga. He was poor and his wife always scolded him. "Get up, you lazy Brahmin", she would say, "Be up and doing, you idler. Don't you see that the children are starving? Go and get some food "

At last, tired of hearing these taunts, the Brahmin left his home and set out on a long journey. After a few days he entered a dense forest. Parched with thirst, he searched

for water and eventually came upon a well. When he looked in, he discovered that a tiger, a monkey, a snake and a man had fallen into the well. All of them saw the Brahmin and the hope of rescue dawned in their hearts.

The tiger was the first to speak. "Oh worthy Brahmin", he said, "there is great merit in saving life. Please pull me out so that I may return and join my family."

"Indeed!", said the Brahmin, "the very mention of a tiger makes me shiver. And you want me to pull you out?"

"I give my word of honour", the tiger said, "That no harm will come to you. Please have mercy and save me. You will see that I shall always be grateful."

And so the Brahmin pulled out the tiger. After a while he rescued the monkey also. Then the snake, too, cried for help. The Brahmin shuddered at the very thought of touching him, but when the snake repeatedly promised that he would not bite the Brahmin pulled him out. All the three animals expressed their thankfulness and invited the Brahmin to their respective homes.

The tiger said, "My cave is in a wooded ravine on the slope of that mountain. You must call on me so that I might repay the debt of your kindness to some extent."

The monkey said, "By the side of the cave that my friend has mentioned there is a waterfall. My home is just near the waterfall. Do come whenever you feel like it."

The snake was very brief. He simply said, "Remember me in the hour of need."

Meanwhile the man, who was still at the bottom of the well, was shouting for help. All the three animals warned the Brahmin against rescuing him. "The man is a villain", they said. "Never trust him." But he cried so piteously that the Brahmin was moved. He thought, 'After all he is a man like me. How can I leave him in the well, when I have just rescued these animals?' And so he pulled out the man too.

"I am a goldsmith", said the man, "If you have any gold to be worked into shape bring it to me." With these words he started for home. And the animals, too, went their respective ways.

The Brahmin continued his wanderings for a long time. When at last he started for home he remembered the monkey's invitation. He visited the monkey's home and was received with great affection. The Brahmin enjoyed the delicious fruits offered to him. Then, satisfied that the monkey had shown his gratitude, he visited the tiger. There, too, he was treated with utmost cordiality. And when the Brahmin said farewell to him, the tiger gave him many gold ornaments. "These belong to a prince whom I once killed in the forest", he said, "Take them, my friend, as a humble token of gratitude."

The Brahmin thought that by selling the jewels he would get enough money to live comfortably with his family. And then he suddenly thought of the goldsmith whom he had saved from the well. He said to himself, "Surely I can get these gold ornaments sold at a proper price through the help of my friend. After all I *did* save his life." So he visited the goldsmith and told him what he wanted.

The goldsmith offered him a seat and placed food and water near him. Then he said, "Please remain here while I show your gold to an expert." And, slipping out of the house, he went straight to the king's palace. There he informed the officers that a Brahmin with stolen property was in his house. The officers lost no time in arresting the Brahmin. He was put in fetters and the king ordered him to be executed the next morning. The man had abandoned all hope when he suddenly remembered the snake's words, "Think of me in an emergency." So he called upon the snake to help him.

The snake immediately appeared and, when he was apprised of the situation, said, "I see a way out of this. I shall bite the king's favourite queen. All the conjurers and physicians will fail to cure her. As soon as you touch her I shall withdraw the poison. The king will not only release you but lavish favours upon you."

The plan was carried out. The snake bit the queen and there was great commotion in the palace. All the antidotes were tried, druggists and snake-charmers were summoned

When everyone failed, the Brahmin offered to cure her. He was led to the queen's chamber and at the mere touch of his hand the poison was neutralised.

The Brahmin received great honour and wealth. He revealed to the king how the goldsmith had betrayed him, while the animals whom he had rescued had proved their gratitude. The king arrested the goldsmith and appointed the Brahmin to a high office.

* * *

"That is why", Damanaka said, "I am warning you about this Sanjivaka. The fact that you have been kind to him is no guarantee of his gratitude. Moreover, since your association with the bull you have neglected all the three values of kingship—virtue, wealth and love. The administration has slowed down, conquests have stopped and loyal friends have been neglected."

Pingalaka was considerably shaken by Damanaka's arguments. "Well, what should I do?", he asked, "Shall I warn him?"

"Warn him? That would be the most disastrous policy. Does a wise person ever warn an enemy? Not by a word, nor by a gesture must you arouse his suspicions."

"But, after all, he is a mere grass-eater. How can he do me any harm?"

"Yes, he is a grass-eater. But he may carry out his plan through others who are not. Whichever way you look at it, the situation is dangerous. My lord, let me repeat that a king must not neglect his trusted servants. Whoever leaves his friends and cherishes strangers suffers. Think of what happened to the blue jackal."

But Pingalaka had never heard of the blue jackal. So Damanaka related the following story.

The Blue Jackal

Once a jackal named Chandarava lived near the suburbs of a city. One day hunger goaded him inside the city where

he roamed the streets, looking for food. The city dogs barked at him and snapped at his limbs with their sharp teeth, until the poor jackal was terrified. He fled blindly, trying to escape from the dogs, and strayed into a dyer's house. There he fell into an indigo tub and lay concealed for many hours.

At dawn he managed to crawl out of the tub and somehow reached the forest, his body dyed a deep blue. All the animals of the forest gaped at him in amazement. They thought that an exotic creature had mysteriously appeared, and, scared for their lives, kept at a distance.

Taking advantage of their dismay, Chandarava called to them, "Now, now, you foolish creatures! don't be afraid. Indra has taken mercy on you. Since you had no monarch, Indra has anointed me as your king. My name is Chandarava. You may live peacefully under my protection."

At this all the animals of the forest—lions, tigers, monkeys, leopards, elephants, rabbits and the rest—bowed before him and swore loyalty. "Oh, master", they said, "tell us our duties, and we shall carry them out." So Chandarava appointed a lion as his chief minister, a tiger as his personal valet and a leopard as the custodian of his betel-box. An elephant was made the door-keeper and a monkey was placed in charge of the royal umbrella. But when jackals came near him he insulted them and drove them away, although they were his own kith and kin.

In this way Chandarava lived in kingly glory. Lions and tigers killed animals for him and he ate the most delicious morsels. And then he distributed the remainder of the food in a grand, royal manner.

One day, while he was sitting in his court, he heard the noise made by a pack of jackals nearby. At this his body quivered with pleasure and tears of joy filled his eyes. He jumped up and gave vent to a piercing howl. For a moment the animals surrounding him were stunned. But soon they understood the situation and felt ashamed at the discovery that they had been imposed upon by a mere jackal. They pounced on him. Chandarava tried to escape but a tiger

pursued him and tore him to bits

* * *

"That is why", Damanaka continued, "I say that one's own friends should never be abandoned. Whoever does so comes to grief."

Pingalaka said, "You are right. But I am still not convinced that Sanjivaka wants to attack me. Can you describe some of the gestures by which I may guess his aggressive designs?"

"Certainly", said Damanaka. "If he comes in your presence with his limbs relaxed, with horns bent to one side, and if he approaches you timidly, you should conclude that he harbours treachery in his mind."

"Very well, I shall watch out for these symptoms", said Pingalaka.

Damanaka took his leave. After a while he went back to the bull, and put up a show of depression. Sanjivaka asked him, "What is the matter, my friend? You seem to be in low spirits." Damanaka said, "Alas, he who waits upon a king must endure a never-ending succession of worries. His life is not his own. He must pass sleepless nights."

Sanjivaka was baffled. "You are hiding something from me", he said, "You must tell me what is bothering you."

"I suppose I must, however unpleasant the task might be. It is on your account that I am in misery. The master has turned against you. He is determined to kill you and feed all his followers on your body. Ever since I came to know this, I am utterly dejected."

At this Sanjivaka began to shake with fear. "What evil fate is mine!", he exclaimed, "I served the king most loyally and showed nothing but friendship towards him. If a friend is angry for a cause one can remove it. But how can anyone pacify causeless wrath. Alas, what wrong have I done to your master?"

"Don't be a simpleton. Kings often love to inflict injuries without reason. Serpents defile sandal trees and crocodiles

lurk in lotus pools Likewise, malice often dwells in royal hearts You must never place your trust in a king He may be all honey at first, but he turns into poison when it suits him, or when he is misguided by unscrupulous people Remember what sad fate overtook Krathanaka, the camel, when he trusted the lion "

Sanjivaka said, "I would like to hear the story of this camel " And so Damanaka told him this story

How Krathanaka was Betrayed

Once a rich merchant set out on a long journey with valuable brocades and other goods loaded on a pack of camels After traversing a long distance one of the camels, whose name was Krathanaka, was overcome with fatigue As the merchant was not in a position to linger at that place he left the camel behind and proceeded In course of time Krathanaka recovered his strength and made his way to a forest nearby

In this forest there lived a lion named Madotkata He had for his intimate companions a leopard, a crow and a jackal They saw the camel from a distance and were surprised by his strange shape The lion approached him and asked, "My dear fellow, who are you and where have you come from?" Krathanaka described in detail how he was taken ill and stranded, at which the lion felt pity and guaranteed his personal security So the camel joined their company and was treated as a friend

One day the lion received a thrust from an elephant's tusk and was severely wounded He had to keep to his cave A week passed and he was still unable to hunt His companions began to feel the pangs of hunger The lion felt sad but was helpless "Round up some animal", he said, "and bring him near me Even in my present condition I will manage to kill it "

The companions roamed far and wide but were unable to round up any animal that could have served as food So the crow and the jackal met separately and hatched a

plot "My friend", said the jackal, "Why must we wander in the woods in search of food? Here is this camel. He trusts our king, and he is big enough to last us for quite some time."

"An excellent idea", said the crow, "But do you think the Master will agree to kill him? He has guaranteed the camel's security."

"No harm trying. I will try to persuade the Master." With these words the jackal went to the lion's cave and said, "Master, we searched the entire forest but were unable to round up a suitable animal. We are now too tired to move a muscle. Moreover, we are pained to see you fasting. There is only one thing to do. We have got to kill Krathanaka."

Madotkata was horrified by the proposal. "Shame on you", he said, "Never dare to repeat the suggestion, or I will strike you dead. I promised his personal security. How can I kill him?"

The jackal, having failed to persuade the lion, now changed his tactics. "I agree with you, Master", he said, "It would be sinful to kill him without provocation. But it would be quite another matter if he were to offer his life to you out of devotion and gratitude. No blame would attach to you in that case. However, if this is not possible you must kill us one by one. What is the worth of our miserable lives if they cannot be spent in your service? Moreover, if you were to die of hunger we shall, in any case, plunge into the funeral pyre out of grief. Since we have to die either way, why not kill us and sustain your strength?"

These words made a deep impression on Madotkata. The idea of killing his own companions was abhorrent to him. He reluctantly agreed to kill the camel provided the latter voluntarily offered himself.

The jackal rejoined his friends and said, "Gentlemen, the Master's condition is critical. Hunger has laid him low. He is sinking. If the king goes, what will happen to this forest? Let us go and offer him our own bodies. In this way we shall pay our debt of gratitude to him and also earn merit for the life to come."

So they all went and sat down with tearful eyes by the

side of Madotkata. The crow was the first to speak. "Oh, beloved Master", he cried, "please eat me and support your life at least for half a day. Please give me this chance of acquiring heavenly bliss."

The jackal cut him short and said, "Friend crow, this is indeed noble of you. But your body is so small that the Master cannot satisfy his hunger by eating you. You have shown your loyalty. Now make way and let me do my duty." With these words the jackal bowed low and addressed the lion with half-shut eyes. "Master, please utilize my body and lengthen your life. The life of a servant is eternally forfeit to his Lord in lieu of the pay he receives. By taking away this life the Master commits no sin. On the contrary he bestows upon the servant the merit of saintliness."

Not to be outdone, the leopard said, "Excellent, my friend, excellent. But I am afraid even your body is rather too small. Besides, it would not be proper for the Master to eat you. If you will forgive my saying so, your family hardly constitutes food fit for a king. You have done your bit, now let me win the Master's grace." And so the leopard bowed low before Madotkata and, with great show of devotion, begged to be eaten.

When he heard all these touching offers, Krathanaka thought 'What elegant phrases these fellows have been using! And yet the Master has not touched any of them. I think I should also make a speech worthy of the occasion. These three will, I know, contradict me.' And so he said, "Friend leopard, how can the Master eat you? You are his kinsman. Make way for me."

And then, turning to the lion, he said, "Master, none of these are worthy to be eaten. Please prolong your life by consuming my body so that I may win merit everlasting."

As soon as he had uttered these words the lion gave the signal. The leopard and the jackal tore up poor Krathanaka's body, and the crow pecked out his eyes. And all of them, famished as they were, devoured him.

Having heard this story Sanjivaka was convinced that, in spite of the safe conduct promised by him, Pingalaka would not hesitate to kill him. So he asked Damanaka, "My friend, give me some tips. How can I guess the King's intentions?"

Damanaka answered, "Why, that is easy. As you know, he usually sits on a slab of stone with his limbs relaxed. If you find that now his tail is drawn in, paws gathered together, and ears pricked up, and if you detect a watchful look in his eyes while you are still far off, you may be sure that he is bent upon treachery."

When Damanaka was gone, Sanjivaka took stock of the situation. 'What am I to do?', he thought, 'I might go away elsewhere, but then some other creature will kill me. After all, this is a jungle. Alas, when the Master is furious one cannot feel safe even in flight. The only course open to me is to approach the lion. When he sees me as a suppliant he might spare my life.'

And having come to this conclusion he slowly started, troubled in spirit and shaking with fear. When he was still far off he saw Pingalaka in the posture described by Damanaka. He was convinced that the lion had decided to kill him. So he instinctively bent his horns and approached timidly.

Pingalaka, in his turn, saw the bull in the attitude predicted by Damanaka. So he made a sudden spring at his former friend Sanjivaka, though his body was torn by sharp claws, attacked the lion's belly with his horns, and managed to break away from him. Both of them stood in fighting postures, ready to fall upon each other.

Damanaka and Karataka were watching the fight from a distance. They had been friends for a long time. But now Karataka was revolted by the tragic results of his friend's conspiracy. "You fool", he said, "What have you done! In setting these two at enmity you have done a wicked deed. You have brought trouble and confusion to the entire forest. You claim to be a counsellor. Don't you know that a counsellor's duty is to try conciliation first and last?"

What calamitous advice have you given our Master! You could not see the two of them happy, and so you have broken up their friendship. Even I can trust you no longer. Who can count on a friend like you? It is much better to associate with a far-sighted enemy than with a stupid friend. After all, the robber died for his own victims."

"What robber are you talking about?", asked Damanaka, and Karataka told him the following story

The Thoughtful Enemy

There was once a prince who had two close companions—a merchant's son and a scholar's son. The three of them passed their time in various diversions and entertainments, both literary and otherwise. The prince had no interest left in archery, hunting, the science of warfare and other royal occupations. At last one day his father rebuked him roundly for his indifference to kingly pursuits.

The prince told his friends how severely the king had upbraided him. They rejoined that their fathers, too, had similar ideas and had often pulled them up for their indifference towards commerce and scholarship respectively. The prince said, "My friends, we are all in the same boat. We share a common grief. We have all been insulted by our fathers. We cannot remain here any longer. Let us go somewhere else."

Then they fell to discussing where it would be advisable to go. The merchant's son said, "No desire can be fulfilled without money. Let us go to the Mountain of Prosperity. There, if luck is with us, we shall find precious gems. And with this wealth we can proceed to enjoy all that we crave for."

And so they journeyed to the Mountain of Prosperity. Guided by a friendly providence each of them found a priceless gem. But when they began their return journey, a doubt arose in their minds. Knowing that they would have to pass through deep forests, they were frightened at the prospect of being attacked by bandits. Pondering over their predicament, they at last decided to swallow the

gems and carry them in their stomachs. In this way, they felt, even the most thorough search of their persons would not reveal their wealth.

During their next meal each inserted his gem in a mouthful of food and swallowed it. While they were doing so, a man resting on the slope of the mountain watched them. He reflected 'What luck! I have been tramping this mountainside for days and have found nothing, while these fellows have discovered magnificent gems. I shall become their travelling companion and, when they are sunk in sleep, I shall despatch them. Then I can cut open their stomachs and secure the gems.'

With this evil thought in his mind the man descended from the mountain, approached them, and said, "Gentlemen I lack the courage to travel through the forest all by myself. Will you be so good as to admit me in your group? I shall be most grateful to you, and you may rest assured that I shall not be a burden." The three friends, being friendly and unsuspecting by nature, agreed, and all of them continued the journey together. While passing through the forest they reached a village inhabited by robbers. Their chief kept a number of cage-birds in his hut. He understood the meaning of all their songs and thus often acquired strange information. Now one of these birds began to sing as soon as he saw the four travellers. The chief of the robbers heard the song with great delight. He summoned his followers and said, "Just listen to the bird's song. He says there are precious gems in the possession of those travellers. Catch them and bring them here."

The robbers, obeying their orders, rounded up the travellers and led them to the chief's hut. The chief thoroughly searched the travellers with his own hands but found nothing. So he set them free. But as soon as they had been freed the bird sang the same song again. This happened a number of times, until the chief got angry and said, "I have tested this bird again and again. He never tells lies. Where are the gems? Out with them!" The travellers protested saying, "If we had any gems would you not have

discovered them? You have carried out a most careful search " But the chief retorted, "I don't know about that The bird says over and over again that the gems are in your possession They must be inside your stomachs It is now evening I spare you for the night Tomorrow morning I shall cut you open " And with these words he flung them in a dark cell

Now the thief who had joined the three companions with evil intentions reflected 'Alas, in the morning I must die Along with the others I shall also be killed It is best, then, that I should offer my own body first In this way I may be able to save the men whom I had wickedly planned to kill When my stomach is cut open and the robber-chief finds nothing precious in it, he will reconsider the idea of killing the others Heartless though he is, he will shrink from needless murder Thus by saving their lives and wealth I shall be doing a generous deed and shall gain merit That will be a wise man's death '

At dawn the chief of the robbers dragged the travellers out of the cell and prepared to slash their bellies The thief among them clasped his hands in prayer and said, "At least grant me this favour Cut my belly first so that I may not have to witness the butchering of my brothers " The chief agreed, and with one stroke of his sword killed him But when he did not find any gems in the dead man's belly he repented his action "What a stupid thing have I done !", he said, "Guided by a mere bird I have killed a man from whom I could gain nothing The others, too, have probably been telling me the truth There may be no gems in their stomachs, after all "

And so he released the travellers who, crossing the forest unharmed, reached the city with their wealth intact

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"That is why", Karataka continued, "I feel that it is better to have a wise enemy than a stupid friend You, whom our Master trusted, have been the cause of his disaster You have done wrong, and a person like you must shunned "

Karataka's denunciation was lost upon his friend. Lessons in morality held no appeal for him. So he quietly edged away. Meanwhile Pingalaka and Sanjivaka had renewed their battle. Very soon the bull's resistance was over, and Pingalaka killed him. When he saw his beloved friend lying dead, the lion's anger melted away. He was overwhelmed by grief and repentance. "Alas, what have I done!", he bewailed, "Sanjivaka was my dearest friend, and I have killed him with my own hands. How could I do such a monstrous thing?" And then, wiping his tears with his blood-smeared paw, Pingalaka sobbed for a long time.

Karataka approached him and drove home the lesson of the great calamity. "All this has happened, Sir," he said, "because you trusted a single adviser, and an unscrupulous one at that. A king is always surrounded by petty individuals who are waiting to lead their Master astray. When they succeed, that is the end of royal glory. A monarch should always consult his counsellors separately and then arrive at his own decision. Sometimes things appear in a false light. A firefly is mistaken for a spark of fire and the sky looks flat. Likewise an argument may look very convincing, but the king must examine it closely to see if it is really sound. He must always consider the ultimate issue and take into account the complexities of every situation. Above all he must be his own master."

In this way Karataka gave befitting advice to the lion. The damage, however, had already been done. A tender friendship had been broken up, the kingdom had suffered through suspense and strife, and an innocent and valuable companion had been killed. And all this because Pingalaka, the King of the Forest, had allowed himself to be led away by a greedy and malicious jackal.

BOOK II

The Enmity of Owls and Crows

ON the outskirts of a prosperous city in the southern country there was once a mighty banyan tree, with countless branches spread over a vast area. In this tree there lived a tribe of crows ruled by a wise king named Meghavarna. The king was just and his subjects were loyal. All of them lived together happily and peacefully among the branches of that huge tree.

They had, however, one great source of anxiety. As the result of an ancient grudge, a king of owls, Arimardana by name, had taken to killing Meghavarna's subjects. Whenever, in the course of his wanderings, Arimardana came across a crow, he killed him on the spot and passed on merrily.

When this continued for some time Meghavarna summoned all his advisers and said, "Gentlemen, the situation is serious. Our enemy is proud and powerful. He always comes after dark and causes panic in our ranks. We cannot counter-attack because by night we are helpless and in the day the enemy hides himself in his fortress. What shall we do? Let us meet in a secret session and chalk out a course of action. Shall we make peace, or go to war? Shall we change our base or entrench ourselves? Shall we seek allies or take recourse to deception? Speak up, gentlemen."

The king had five ancestral counsellors. Their names were Ujjivi, Sanjivi, Anujivi, Prajivi and Sthirjivi. Meghavarna first turned to Ujjivi and asked his opinion.

Ujjivi replied, "Your Majesty, I am in favour of peace. One should not make war against a powerful enemy. Besides, war brings disaster to every one. We must never stir a quarrel, we should rather endure pain. Under the enemy's pressure we should bend like a reed rather than

strike back like a serpent. The cloud does not make war against the wind, though the wind is bent upon scattering it."

The king next asked the opinion of Sanjivi. He said, "Sir, I disagree. The enemy is greedy, merciless and without principles. With such people conciliation is impossible. We should rather fight and try our fortunes in the battle-field. He has humiliated us. If we propose peace, he will fall upon us with redoubled vigour. Conciliation only feeds an enemy's violence, like drops of water sprinkled on boiling butter. My friend Ujjivi refers to the enemy's power and strength. But this argument is not decisive. The small can often kill the great through energy and skill. The lion gets the better of the elephant. We may be small, but that is no reason why we may not defeat the owls. No, Sir. Peace is ruled out. I am for war."

It was Anujivi's turn to give his opinion. He put on a cautious expression and slowly said, "The enemy is vicious and powerful. Peace and war are both fraught with dangers. In my opinion the only way is to change our headquarters. Thereby we can retreat for the time being, in order to invade at the right moment. The matter has been discussed by the classical writers with due regard to cause and effect. Often in the past mighty kings have abandoned their realms in order to stage a victorious counter-attack. Even rams draw back before attacking vigorously. And the lion's spring is most deadly when he crouches before he strikes. We must not make this a question of pride. We have to do what the occasion demands. The present moment is no time for either peace or war."

At this Prajivi said, "Oh King, I am afraid I cannot approve of any of these suggestions. Change of base will do no good. A crocodile at home can defeat even an elephant, but on alien territory even a dog can harass it. We should neither make overtures of peace nor launch an offensive, nor change our headquarters. We must firmly entrench ourselves here and wait till the enemy's strength is exhausted. If an army stands firm, well-equipped with all

the materials, the besiegers feel helpless. Let us unite and stick confidently to our ancestral home."

Meghavarna then turned to Chiranjivi and asked, "My friend, what have you to say?" Chiranjivi said, "In my opinion what we need is the friendship of strong allies. Without friends no struggle can be successfully waged. Even the fire needs the support of the wind. It is not necessary to leave our home, but it is necessary that we obtain assistance from outside. The ally we seek need not be powerful. Even two weak friends can score over a single powerful enemy."

Having heard these opinions Meghavarna turned towards a venerable old crow named Sthirajivi. Farsighted and wise, resourceful and thoroughly conversant with all the textbooks of political science, Sthirajivi was the patriarch among Meghavarna's advisers. The king looked upon him as a father and, at a moment of crisis, his judgment was considered final. Now Meghavarna, in sore need of his help, said, "Sir, I have questioned others in your presence with a definite purpose. I desired that you might listen to all their suggestions and then guide me along the course you deem best."

Sthirajivi said, "My son, I have carefully heard their opinions. They have drawn upon standard works on diplomacy and military science. Each course is proper in its own place. But just now what we need is duplicity. We must not pin our faith either in peace or in war, nor in other measures that have been suggested. We have to gain the enemy's trust and then destroy him. And this we can do by discovering a vulnerable point."

"But", Meghavarna protested, "I do not know their castle. How shall I discover their weak point?"

Sthirajivi replied, "Have patience, my son. Through spies the necessary information will be obtained. And another thing—you must never forget the background of the struggle between the owls and ourselves. You must keep the historical sequence in mind."

Meghavarna requested Sthirajivi to describe the origin

of the conflict between the two tribes of birds And the venerable counsellor narrated the following chronicle

The Owl's Coronation

Once upon a time all the birds gathered in a forest There were cranes and nightingales, doves and partridges, skylarks and cuckoos, peacocks and woodpeckers and many others

The problem before them was stated by one of the birds in this way "Gentlemen, we must choose a king It is true that Garuda is supposed to be our monarch But all his time is taken up in the service of Vishnu He hardly ever bothers about us What is the good of an absentee king? When we are in distress he is nowhere near at hand If we are caught in traps, he cannot rescue us A king like him is like a leaky ship Let us, then, select some one who will be a king in fact, not just a king in name "

Now, while this proposal was being made, all the birds had turned their attention to the owl He looked so solemn, so earnest and venerable, that they said, "Well, why delay matters? Let the owl be our king And let us have the coronation as early as possible "

And so preparations for the anointing ceremony were commenced right away Birds were despatched to various holy streams in order to fetch pure water A bouquet was made out of the traditionally prescribed leaves and flowers, including the yellow lotus A map of the seven continents, mountains, and oceans was drawn up, symbolising the future king's glorious conquests A tiger-skin was spread upon the throne Golden jars were filled with rice and decorated with twigs and blossoms Brahmins were hired to recite the Vedas Poets chanted verses from the epics Maidens sang festive ditties Holiday-drums rumbled And the owl was led in a procession towards the spot where the ritual was to take place

Just when he had taken his seat, a crow came there, heaven knows why and wherefrom He cawed raucously, as crows always do when they want to attract attention

Looking around, he was baffled by the grand preparations 'What's all the fuss about?', he thought 'Must be some great festival' Meanwhile the birds had seen him They had all heard that crows were exceedingly shrewd And so they thought that his advice should be taken about the choice they had just made One of them approached him and said, "Friend crow, as you know we birds have no king—at least not the kind of a king who might really rule over us We have chosen this owl as a worthy candidate for the throne What is your opinion?"

The crow burst into laughter For some time he was unable to speak, so great was his amusement At last he looked at them pityingly and said, "Gentlemen, is this a joke or is it plain foolishness? I see among you such eminent people as peacocks, cranes, swans, and nightingales And yet you choose this ugly fellow, blind in the day and stupid by day as well as night! Just look at his hooked nose, his squinting eyes, and the rest of him Just now he is in a good temper, as he has every reason to be And yet he looks repulsive What would he look like if he were to get angry? Moreover, Garuda is there already To have two kings is like asking for two suns in the sky Garuda has prestige His name carries weight What impression would the mention of an owl make on anybody? No, no, gentlemen A king must have some status Surely you remember how the rabbit fulfilled an extremely difficult assignment merely by mentioning a great name"

"How was that?", asked the birds, and the crow told them this story

The Clever Rabbit

There was once a great elephant-king named Chaturdanta He ruled over a large band of elephants and spent his time in carrying out his royal duties faithfully His subjects were devoted to him

But who can contend against misfortune?

Once there was a failure of rain for twelve years in succes-

sion All the tanks, ponds and lakes went dry Every tree, shrub and creeper shrivelled up At last the elephants said to their king, "Sir, our little ones are tortured by thirst Some of them are dead and others are gasping for breath Pray devise some method of obtaining water " Moved by their plight, the king despatched reliable messenger-elephants in every direction to search for water

Those who went east found a lake named Chandrasarovara It was a beautiful spot indeed The shores of the lake were adorned with trees of many kinds The trees groaned under the weight of blossoms, while birds of beautiful plumage twittered and sang among their branches The lake had crystal clear water, beautified with clusters of many-coloured lilies Swans, ducks, herons and other aquatic creatures lived peacefully in that lake

Enchanted by this sight, the scouts hastened back and reported to the king Chaturdanta decided to migrate to the lake He wound up his establishment, and along with all his subjects travelled by stages to the shores of Chandrasarovara Now, as it happened, a large tribe of rabbits had made their home near the lake Many of them were crushed to death under the feet of the elephants Others were wounded and crippled Many lost their young ones, their friends or their parents And the elephants did not even notice the destruction they had caused

Those rabbits who had luckily survived held a convention "What are we to do?", they said, "These brutes will come every day and very soon our entire race will be wiped out " Thereupon a rabbit named Vijaya heroically offered to try his wits against the elephants "Have no fear, my friends", he said, "I shall see to it that the elephants go away from here "

The king of the rabbits said, "This is a deed of valour that you have offered to do I appoint you my envoy Look after yourself May providence smile upon your efforts "

So Vijaya approached the king of the elephants He was surrounded by many lordly elephants whose cars

swayed like the branches of trees The king looked like a mighty cloud to which flashes of lightning cling His trumpeting was deep like the sound of a thunderbolt His tusks were of the colour of honey Fragrant ichor-juice trickled from his temples, attracting a swarm of bees

Vijaya thought 'I must not go too near this stupendous fellow An elephant can kill you by the mere touch Let me find a safe place from where I can talk to him '

He found a suitable spot on a pile of rocks Perched there, he said to the elephant in a squeaky voice, "How goes it with you, Oh Lord of the two-tusked species?" The elephant-king was surprised at being thus addressed His narrow eyes peered this way and that At last he said dubiously, "And pray who may *you* be, Sir?"

"I am an envoy, of course", said the rabbit

"An envoy? In whose service?"

"In the service of the Blessed Moon "

"Well, in that case please state your business "

The rabbit had not failed to notice that the elephant was already impressed He carried through his advantage and said with an air of great importance, "Sir, you must know that envoys enjoy special privileges No injury must be done to them Now hear my message My Master asks of you

How have you dared to do violence to others, grossly misjudging your own power? Are you looking for disaster? This lake is known by my sacred name The whole world calls it the Lake of the Moon And you have, near this very lake, killed and wounded rabbits who are under my protection These rabbits are descended from the rabbit-king whom I cherish so dearly that I always clasp him to my bosom Every living creature in the world knows about the rabbit in the moon You alone seem to be ignorant Now desist from such impertinence, otherwise I shall withdraw my light from you—the light by which you and your companions roam about in the forest so happily Without my light you will be scorched by the heat and will soon perish, along with your subjects '

The elephant-king heard this with awe and amazement. He was silent for a while, and then said, "Sir, you are right. I have indeed sinned against the Blessed Moon. Now please point out to me how I can go and ask his forgiveness."

"Very well", said the rabbit, "But you must come alone. And see that you mind your manners."

So when it was dark the rabbit escorted the elephant to the shore of the lake and pointed to the moon reflected in the water. The brilliant disc, surrounded by planets and stars, quivered on the lake's crystal-clear surface. With great deference the elephant said, "I bow to the Blessed Moon and purify myself." With these words he dipped his trunk in the water. As he did so the water was disturbed and the reflection of the moon danced this way and that. Vijaya started back as if a great sacrilege had been committed. "Stop, oh rash elephant", he exclaimed, "Do you want to anger the moon beyond all limits?"

The elephant said very humbly, "My friend, in what way have I offended your master?"

"By touching this water, which is sacred, and belongs exclusively to the Moon and his attendants", Vijaya said. Chaturdanta touched the earth in homage, and in all humility begged the moon's forgiveness. Then, treading very gently, he went away, never to return. And from that moment onwards the rabbits were left in peace.

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"That is why", the crow continued, "I believe that a great name makes all the difference. This miserable owl whom you have selected has no status at all. If you make him your king, you will only be placing yourself in his power. Remember, you are blind at night while he can see well enough to do what he pleases."

When the birds had heard the crow's remarks they felt ashamed of their haste in choosing the owl for the throne. So they slipped away to their homes, intending to reassemble at some other time to discuss the question. Meanwhile the owl, being blind in the day time, saw nothing of what was

going on. He remained seated on the throne that had been set up. After a while he called out, "You, there! Why is the ceremony delayed? Who takes my orders?"

At this his escort said, "Sir, there is no one here. The crow has somehow broken up the ceremony. All the birds have flown away and only the crow remains. Arise, Your Majesty, I shall conduct you home."

The owl's disappointment was as great as his anger. Addressing the crow, whom he could not see, he said, "You monster, why have you come in the way of my coronation? What harm had I done you? From this day there is bitter enmity between your race and mine. The wound that you have caused will never heal."

When the owl went away the crow reflected 'Alas! I have unnecessarily made an enemy. That was foolish of me. One must never make an enemy for nothing, even if he is harmless. After all, we do not take poison just because there is a doctor in the locality. However, what is done is done.' And with these thoughts the crow left the spot, carrying vague apprehensions in his mind.

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When Sthirajivi had finished his narrative of the ancient quarrel between owls and crows, Meghavarna said, "Father, I now understand the deep-rooted enmity between the owls and ourselves. Our struggle is going to be a bitter one. Now what would you advise me to do?"

Sthirajivi answered, "However difficult the circumstances, there is always an effective procedure to lead us to victory. We must not be tied up by the five classical expedients which my young friends have advocated one by one. What we need is to throw the enemy off his guard and to mislead him completely. When the three vagabonds deceived the Brahmin and grabbed his goat, they demonstrated how an unorthodox device may be used with success."

Meghavarna said, "I have not heard the story of the Brahmin and the vagabonds."

So Sthirajivi told him this story.



The Clever Rabbit

Three Rogues and a Brahmin

There was once a Brahmin named Mitrasharma who was in charge of the sacred fire in a certain town. One day, when it was cold and the sky was overcast with clouds, he had to go to another village in order to procure a victim for the sacrifice. Having secured a nice, fat goat the Brahmin turned his footsteps homeward.

On the road he was seen by three vagabonds who had gone without food for some time. When they saw the goat flung upon the Brahmin's shoulders, their mouth watered. They whispered together, "If only we could get hold of that creature! Why, we could have a fine hot roast! And what a pleasure that would be on a chilly afternoon like this!"

The rogues hit upon a plan to deprive the Brahmin of his goat.

One of them changed his dress and, overtaking the Brahmin by a short-cut, addressed him thus: "Oh holy man, what has happened to you? Why are you carrying this dog on your shoulder? Don't you know that the dog is universally regarded as an unclean animal?"

The Brahmin was as furious as he was surprised. "My man", he said sharply, "are you blind? You seem to have two clear eyes and yet attribute doghood to a goat!"

The rogue put on an ironical expression and said, "Sir, you are right and I am wrong. It is indeed a goat. Do not be angry with me."

When the Brahmin had proceeded a little farther, he was accosted by the second rascal, who said in a shocked voice, "Alas, what are things coming to! The very idea of carrying a dead calf on one's shoulder! What sacrilege for a Brahmin! Sir, it is possible that the calf was a pet. I can understand your love for it. But after all there are certain things that are just not done. Now please purify yourself with a fast and perform charities."

The Brahmin said angrily, "Why, there is no end to blind men in this region. Stupid fellow, why do you call a goat a calf?"

"Holy Brahmin, calm yourself" said the scoundrel, "Indeed, you are wise and I am ignorant even though you do put a dead calf on your shoulder Please do whatever you please"

By this time the Brahmin was in a thoroughly bad temper and his mind was confused When, therefore, he met the third rogue, who accosted him as the others had done, he was no longer sure of himself The rogue said, "Sir, it is no business of mine, and yet I cannot keep silent when I see a Brahmin carrying a donkey on his shoulder For a man of the highest caste it is a sin to touch a donkey. And if he does so by mistake, he must wash himself and do penance Good lord, what an evil age we are living in!"

At this the Brahmin was convinced that what was given to him as a goat was really an evil spirit which had assumed the forms of different animals from time to time So he threw the goat on the ground and fled in panic The three rogues met, got hold of the goat, and had a rollicking good supper

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Sthirajivi continued, "That is why I feel confident that through a clever device we shall gain our end In fact I have already thought of something But it is a plan that must be treated as a closely-guarded secret"

"Tell me what you have in mind", said Meghavarna, whose curiosity was roused by the wise counsellor's words. "We shall all be most circumspect"

Sthirajivi said, "Listen carefully, my son You know the classical types of strategy based on conciliation, intrigue, bribery and assault But I have hit upon an entirely new plan We must stage a mock civil war and thus deceive the enemy You shall pretend to turn against me, abuse me most cruelly and smear me with blood Then you shall throw me at the foot of this tree and go away to a distant place You must stay there with your followers until I win the enemy's trust and discover their secret castle You should not feel any pity for me, though I know it will be

difficult for you to treat me harshly even to hoodwink the enemy "

The plan was carried out Sthirajivi and Meghavarna staged a sham fight at a time when enemy spies were watching Sthirajivi used rebellious language and insulted the king The younger counsellors were enraged and were about to strike down Sthirajivi when the king intervened and said, "You keep out of this, my friends I shall personally punish this traitor " And then he pounced upon the elder statesman, pecked at him, and smeared him with blood which he had already procured Then, while Sthirajivi groaned and appeared to be at death's door, Meghavarna went away to a distant tree among the mountains

As anticipated, spies reported the incident to the king of owls At sundown Arimardana came to the banyan tree along with a few picked followers He found that the enemy's headquarters were deserted Arimardana gloated over his victory and court poets who were among the followers recited paeans of victory The king said, "Discover their line of retreat We must pursue and destroy them before they make a new home

At this, Sthirajivi cawed in a feeble voice and attracted the attention of the owls They were about to kill him when he said, "Gentlemen, I am Meghavarna's minister My name is Sthirajivi You can see what reward I have obtained for my life-long devotion to the king of crows He has insulted and wounded me I am now determined to have my vengeance Please take me to your king I want to discuss certain matters with him "

Hearing that a distinguished counsellor of the rival king had deserted, Arimardana approached Sthirajivi and said, "Well, Sir, what is it that you want to discuss with me ? And who has reduced you to this state ?"

The wily crow said, "Oh King, I shall tell you the whole story Yesterday that fool of a Meghavarna, mad with anger at the sight of the crows that you had killed, started for your fortress I tried to restrain him I told him you were too strong for us and that we should humbly seek

peace by paying you tribute and recognising your overlordship. Instead of listening to my advice, the king suspected me of treachery. His advisers egged him on and you see the result. Forgetting what I had done for his welfare, he mercilessly attacked me. Now all ties of loyalty are broken. I take shelter with you. I shall conduct you to his new home and help you in completely destroying the race of crows."

Arimardana now took counsel with his own advisers. He first questioned Raktaksha, who was the seniormost among them. "My worthy Sir", he said, "You have heard this crow's story. Now tell me what is to be done."

"Oh King", said Raktaksha in an impatient tone, "Surely there is nothing to consider. He is an enemy. Kill him without hesitation."

But the other advisers did not agree with this opinion. One of them said that it would be heartless to put to death a person who was begging for shelter. Another asserted that Sthirajivi would be a valuable source of information regarding the enemy's plans, resources and tactics. A third said that friendship between former enemies was not a rare thing, and that Sthirajivi might turn out to be a pleasant and interesting companion. In this way all of them, in the name of either sentiment or expediency, advised that Sthirajivi should be admitted as a friend and the maximum advantage should be taken of him. Arimardana accepted this advice.

Raktaksha, however, stuck to his view. He was convinced that a calamitous decision had been taken by his king. He bitterly said, "Gentlemen, you have the satisfaction of having paved the way for your master's ruin. How gullible you all are! How easily has the enemy thrown dust in your eyes! Even now it is not too late. I beseech you to reconsider your decision."

Sthirajivi was apprehensive that the scales might be turned against him. So he hypocritically said, "Oh king, I am in a poor state. I am hardly in a position to help you, and yet you are so kind to me. Now please grant me one

favour Ask your followers to kindle a blazing fire for me "

Raktaksha taunted him and said, "Indeed, for what holy purpose do you wish to enter fire?"

Sthirajivi replied, "I wish to be reborn as an owl so that in my next birth I may be of some service to your king "

But the clever counsellor was not taken in "My dear Sir", he said, "You are indeed a great diplomat But I assure you, even if you are reborn as an owl you would still be loyal to the crows The bonds of nature cannot be severed The mouse-maiden could have married a magnificent bridegroom But she chose a mouse all the same!"

Since none of them had heard of the mouse-maiden's marriage, Raktaksha told them this story

The Mouse-maiden's Wedding

On the bank of the river Ganga there was once a hermitage where holy men spent their time in meditation, sacred rites, and the study of the scriptures They sustained themselves only with roots, bulbs and fruit Their dress consisted of a loin-cloth made out of the bark of trees They led a life of self-denial and purity

The father of this hermitage was Yajnavalkya, the great sage One day, as he was rinsing his mouth after a bath in the sacred river, a small female mouse dropped from a hawk's beak The sage caught the poor thing in mid-air, laid her tenderly on a leaf, and repeated his bath, followed by a ceremony of purification Then, through the miraculous power that he had gained by his austerities, Yajnavalkya transformed the female mouse into a girl and took her with him to his hermitage

Addressing his wife, who was childless, the sage said, "My dear, chance has brought this girl to our home You must accept her as your daughter and look after her" So the wife reared the girl with great affection and petted her so much that she became self-willed

When the girl attained the age of twelve, Yajnavalkya's wife said, "The time has come when this daughter of ours

should be married "

"You are right", said the sage "A maiden must be wedded before she attains to womanhood If her parents allow the years to slip by, she may remain a spinster And then, in order to avoid sin, the father may marry her off to any husband, good, bad or indifferent We must find a suitable husband without delay, some one who would be worthy of our dear daughter, some one who has fame, good looks, knowledge and comes of a noble family "

"But", said Yajnavalkya's wife, "can you think of such a perfect bridegroom?"

"Of course I can", the sage asserted, "I have led a holy life and I am not afraid of aiming high I shall ask the Blessed Sun himself to marry our daughter "

And so the holy sage sent for the Sun who came at once "Sir, why have you remembered me?", the Sun asked Yajnavalkya said, "My dear, here is my daughter She is in every way worthy to be your wife Will you marry her?"

The Sun agreed. So the sage turned towards his daughter and said, "Here is the Blessed Sun, the lamp of the universe How do you like him for a husband?"

To his surprise the girl turned down the proposal "Oh no, father", she said, "He is too hot Please find some one better than he is "

Yajnavalkya turned to the Sun and asked him whether there was any one superior to him The Sun replied, "Yes, the Cloud is greater than I am He has the power to obscure me "

So the sage sent for the Cloud and asked the girl whether she was satisfied with his choice But the girl disapproved "He is black and nebulous", she said, "Please find some one more worthy of me " The holy man asked the Cloud whether there was any one superior to him, and the cloud mentioned the Wind So the Wind was summoned, but the girl complained that he was too fidgety and asked for a better husband

"Oh Wind", said Yajnavalkya, "Is there any one stronger than you?"

"Certainly", said the Wind, "The Mountain is stronger than me. Try as I might, I cannot shake him." So the Mountain was called and offered to the girl as her bridegroom. But she refused. "Oh father", she complained, "Just see how rough he is, and how hard. Please give me to some one else."

Yajnavalkya turned to the Mountain and asked, "Oh Noble Mountain, is there any one superior to you?"

The Mountain thought for a while and then remarked, "Well, perhaps I can say that mice are superior to me. All the time they are burrowing holes in my body."

So the sage summoned a mouse and asked his daughter, "Little girl, what do you say to *this* bridegroom?"

As soon as she saw the mouse the girl was thrilled. She quivered with pleasure, and felt that she had met her own kind. "Oh father, what a fine husband you have found for me", she said rapturously, "Please turn me into a mouse and marry me to him. I shall keep house for him in a manner befitting the race of mice."

So Yajnavalkya turned the girl into a mouse once again and married her off.

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"That is why", said Raktaksha, "I am convinced that even if you are reborn as an owl, all your affection will be for the crows." Then, turning to his own king, he once more pleaded for the destruction of Sthirajivi. But Arimardana did not listen to him.

The owls took the crow to their own fortress. On the way, Sthirajivi laughed inwardly and said to himself, "What fools these owls are. If they had any sense they would have listened to the sound advice given by Raktaksha. It is lucky for me that they have failed to see the wisdom of his words."

When they came to the gate of the fortress, King Arimardana said, "My friends, give our guest whichever room he prefers. He is our well-wisher." When Sthirajivi heard this, he reflected, "I must not stay inside the fortress."

If I live among them, my movements would be watched and my true purpose betrayed ' So he said to the king of owls, "Your Majesty, I am indeed your well-wisher And I am touched by your kindness But I know that a servant must stick to his own proper position I shall take my place humbly at the fortress-gate, and every day I shall come to pay homage at your feet "

Arumardana was flattered and trusted Sthirajivi completely He ordered the royal cooks to send choice morsels of food to the guest every day Very soon the wily crow became plump and vigorous like a peacock

Meanwhile Raktaksha watched with amazement and anger the hospitality that was being lavished on an enemy He repeated his warnings, but, since evil destiny had clouded the vision of Arumardana, his words were not heeded So Raktaksha got together his own personal followers and said, "My friends, it is now clear that the end of our race is in sight As an ancestral counsellor it was my duty to have warned the king against the ruinous course that he is following I have tried to save him, but I have failed Now we have no further obligations Let us seek another home "

And so, bidding farewell to the fortress with heavy hearts, Raktaksha and his adherents departed in search of a new home

Sthirajivi was overjoyed 'The greatest obstacle in the way of my success is gone', he reflected 'Of all my enemies he alone was intelligent All the others are stupid My task is now easy The classical writers have shown with many historical references that in the absence of far-sighted advisers the downfall of a king is swift and certain '

Day after day Sthirajivi felt more and more sure of himself Gradually he began to collect a pile of faggots in his own dwelling near the gate of the fortress The owls were too foolish to realise what he was doing When sufficient wood had been piled up, Sthirajivi hastened to inform Meghavarna of his strategy "My son", he said, "Everything is ready You should now come with all your followers, each carrying a lighted faggot in his beak Then let all these



Three Rogues and a Brahmin

torches be simultaneously thrown upon my nest at the gate of the enemy's fortress You will soon see the owls enduring the torments of hell "

Meghavarna was delighted "Father, we are meeting after a long time", he said, "First tell me of your adventures "

But the wise counsellor cut him short "This is no time for gossip", he said "Some enemy spy might get wind of my plan The enemy, though blind, may escape at the last moment Let us not tarry a moment longer When our victory is complete, I shall tell you the whole story "

So Meghavarna and his followers flew to the enemy's fortress carrying lighted torches in their beaks Then they set fire to the pile of wood which Sthirajivi had collected The owls, being blind in the day time, saw nothing of what was being done Soon the fire blazed furiously and, since there was no other exit, all the owls were burnt to death Meghavarna returned to his old home in the banyan tree, and all the crows celebrated their victory over the ancestral foe

When the festivities were over, Sthirajivi said, "The strategy adopted by me in dealing with the owls yields us important lessons It shows us that in the face of danger we must seek a path of escape, but should always have the ultimate object clearly in mind We should be prudent even when we are optimistic We must wait on fortune, watch our steps and curb our impetuosity "

Meghavarna said, "Father, your self-imposed task was difficult indeed To live among the enemy is like submitting to the ordeal of the sword "

"So it is", said Sthirajivi, "But my task was lightened because the enemies were so stupid Never have I seen such a pack of fools anywhere else Only Raktaksha was wise, his intellect was not blunted by his theoretical knowledge He understood my tricks But the other advisers were merely making a living in their king's service without giving anything in return They did not know the most elementary principle of politics, namely, 'Never trust an

enemy' In associating with the owls I had to endure humiliation I had to pose as a deserter and swear loyalty to their king But all this is justifiable The only important thing is to achieve the object Even the big, black snake allowed frogs to ride upon his body But he had a good laugh at the end "

Meghavarna said that he had never heard the story of the snake and the frogs So Sthirajivi narrated the following story

The Cunning Snake

There was once a black snake named Mandavisha He was so cunning that as long as he had physical strength he never lacked food But in his old age he began to find it difficult to secure his victims

One day, desiring to get along without exertion, he thought out a plan

He slowly approached a pond containing many frogs and remained seated on the bank with a sorrowful expression After a while one of the frogs, who had been watching the snake for some time, timidly peeped out of the pond and said, "Uncle, why are you so quiet today? Why don't you chase us? Are you not hungry?"

Mandavisha said, "My friend, I have lost my desire for food Yesterday I saw a frog and tried to catch him He fled from me and escaped among a group of Brahmuns who were reciting the scriptures I looked for him among them and ultimately bit the toe of a Brahmun boy, mistaking it for a frog The boy died at once, and his father cursed me 'You monster', he said, 'since you have caused the death of my poor little son you shall be punished From this moment you shall become the vehicle of frogs They will ride upon you and you will have to carry them wherever they please, subsisting on whatever food they give you out of pity' That is why I have come here to serve as your vehicle "

The frog went and reported this to his king, whose name

was Jalapada. There was great rejoicing among the frogs. One by one they came out of the pond, led by Jalapada, and approached the snake. Mandavisha lay flat on the ground and invited the king of frogs to mount upon his hood. The king was joined by some of his advisers, and then by some of the soldiers. At last every spot of the snake's body was covered and he took the frogs for a joy-ride. Those who had failed to find a place on the snake's body hopped along behind him, clapping and shouting. Mandavisha showed them many interesting places and brought them back. Jalapada was in high spirits. "I would rather ride this snake", he said, "than the finest horse, the most richly-caparisoned elephant, or the most comfortable man-borne palanquin."

The sport continued for a few days and then Mandavisha began to slacken. He would move slowly and soon get exhausted. Jalapada, who had got used to the fun, said, "What is all this? Why don't you carry us cheerfully as before?"

Mandavisha replied, "Oh King, the fact is that I am famished. I have no energy left."

At this the king of frogs picked out some of his subjects and offered them to Mandavisha for his supper. The cunning snake remarked, "The Brahmin's curse has now come true in every respect. He had ordained that I would have to subsist on your charity. Now I can serve you as before." And so he again began to take the king out for joy-rides.

Jalapada, determined to indulge in this amusement at any cost, went on offering to the snake frog after frog. And at last, when all his subjects were gobbled up, the snake promptly caught hold of the king himself and made a meal of him.

Thus Mandavisha, by feigning subservience, attained his purpose.

* * *

Sthirajivi continued, "From this story, my son, it becomes apparent that to enter the enemy's camp, and even to serve the enemy for a while, can prove a valuable arti-

“That is why I lived among the owls and pretended to be loyal to their king

Our war against the owls is now over. You are fortunate. May you continue to enjoy the pleasures of kingship with prudence, self-sacrifice and courage. Our scriptures have laid down that association with the wise leads to virtue, virtue leads to wealth, wealth is the prelude to fame, fame brings power and authority, and these signify the fulfilment of real purpose.”

Meghavarna was deeply moved by his counsellor's words. He expressed his gratitude and said, “Father, all this is the reward of your thorough knowledge of political economy, ethics and military science. With what wonderful acumen did you penetrate the fortress of the owls and exterminate Arimardana and his band!”

“It is true I had a measure of success”, said Sthirajivi. “Remember, extreme steps should never be taken immediately; they should always be preceded by subtle devices. Sometimes gentleness is a necessary preparation for aggression. When a man is about to fell a mighty tree, he first utters a prayer.

My heart is now at peace. I have seen the undertaking through. I wish your dynasty glory and splendour through a long succession of sons, grandsons and beyond. But be careful not to be intoxicated by success or grandeur. The power of kings is transitory, like everything else. Royal glory is difficult to climb, like a bamboo, it is hard to hold, being fidgety like a monkey on a tree-top, it is balanced precariously, like drops of water on a lotus-leaf, it is changeable, like the path of the wind, it is undependable, like the friendship of a dishonest man, it is difficult to tame, like a serpent, it glistens only for a moment, like a cloud at sunset, it is fragile, like bubbles on the surface of a river, it is elusive, like the treasure attained in a dream. Remember all this, and enjoy your kingdom modestly.”

Meghavarna took the wise counsellor's words to heart and, ruling with justice and humility, enjoyed the pleasures of royalty for a long, long time.

Vasavadatta

SUBANDHU
Late Sixth Century A D

APART from the fact that he lived in the first half of the seventh century practically nothing is known of Subandhu, the author of Vasavadatta. There is only one autobiographical reference in his work, and even that is too ambiguous to be of the slightest use to the historian.

The Vasavadatta has been lavishly praised and bitterly criticised.

It has been denounced for its thin plot and weak characterisation, its wearisome alliterations and its erotic descriptions which sometimes border on the salacious.

But it has received unstinted praise for the sheer technical mastery which the author displays. Subandhu shows an uncanny grasp of the sound-value of words, and his metaphors reveal an exceptionally rich poetic fancy.

Vasavadatta is a veritable cataract of figures of speech. It is like one of those small temples at Khajuraho where every square inch of wall-space seems to groan under the weight of ornamentation.

We may complain of over-elaboration, and yet every niche dazzles us by its superb carving!

Vasavadatta

I

ONCE there was a king named Chintamani, unique among sovereigns and powerful beyond compare. The kings on earth bowed before him and his feet became the touchstones for their crown-jewels.

His generosity astonished the world. He protected his people as Varuna protects the western horizon. He was the master of a hundred armies as the ocean is the lord of a hundred rivers, he was the home of the wise as Mount Meru is the home of the gods. His splendid appearance removed all gloom as the sun removes all shadows.

King Chintamani was patient, resolute and resourceful. He was like a great reed by nature, and yet smooth within. While he ruled the earth, quibbling was practised only by logicians, there was infidelity only among materialists, there was picking only of lutes, and sticks were used only for threshing rice. There were fire-ordeals only for pieces of gold, only jewels were pierced by needles, and pain was experienced only by women in labour.

He was like the Himalayas, and yet he was not shaken by snow. He was a mine of gems without any serpents. As the forest bends down before the wind so did the crooked and the unsteady on earth bend down before the king. As the moon is the friend of the white lotus, so was he the friend of all festivities and pleasures. His mansions were filled with works of art, and his treasury contained unsur-

passed wealth

Never did King Chuntamani deviate from the path of the true warrior. He was like Siva, and yet he drank no poison. He was like fire, and yet he only purified, never burnt. He was a stranger to petty strife. Glory and generosity were his trusted attendants.

The king had a son named Kandarpaketu. The prince was a perennial source of joy to his elders, like the coral-tree which stands in Indra's garden. When he grew up, he showed his prowess in war and his charms in love. He made the earth resound, as the mountain that was used in ocean-churning had made the waters resound. He had a pure heart and clung to virtue, as an autumn cloud clings to the sky. He gave pleasure to beautiful women as the spring gives pleasure to gardens. He delighted the wise and profited the humble, but when he descended upon his enemies, he terrified them by his flashing sword, as a thunder-cloud terrifies the birds with its sharp showers.

Kandarpaketu was like the God of Love—indeed, he surpassed the God of Love in his tenderness and fire. He was like the spring attended by the south wind. He had a voice sweet like the nightingale. And the goddess of fortune smiled upon him.

II

The night was almost over. Dawn was about to break. The moon was sinking into the western sea like a goblet emptied by Queen Night. The pollen of lotuses had been converted into cold paste by the dew, and the bees were getting stuck in it. The soft chatter of skylarks was revealing women at their rendezvous. The huts of ascetics were slowly awakening, full of scholarly expectations. Mendicants were chanting poetic tales. The lamps had become so thin and emaciated that they were unable to bear the weight of the night. They had become dull because their oil had been consumed, as clever people become slack when their affections are exhausted. They had only the



Vasavadatta

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bowls left, as noblemen, deprived of their estates, have only their bodies left In the boudoirs, flowers had withered The bees, no longer tempted by honey, had vanished Damsels were getting up Bracelets jingled on their tremulous, slender arms while the apartments were lighted up by the flashing of their lustrous teeth

At this moment of dawn Kandarpaketu saw a wonderful dream

He saw a maiden of heavenly beauty whose lips, in close proximity to her moon-like face, resembled buds glowing in the evening light Her eyes were long and delicate like pine-blossoms They were like windows for Love who lived in the chamber of her heart The corners of those eyes were red, as if angry because the ears hindered their extension Her nose was like a bridge between the two oceans of her eyes, and her delicate brows were like clusters of black-bees hovering around blue lotuses Her waist seemed full of sorrow, unable to see her face which was hidden by two well-rounded obstructions These were themselves accumulations of loveliness—like two lilies emerging from the pool of the heart Her girdle was the golden rampart of the treasurehouse of the city of delight

She seemed to be made of planets—of the Sun because of her splendour, of the Moon because she had a beautiful round face, of Venus because she had lotus-like eyes, of Saturn because she had dark, heavy hair and her gait was languid She was like picture nailed on the wall of life; the meeting place of all the elegance of the three worlds, the perfect elixir for Siva in his youth, the repository of delight She was like Cupid's flag of conquest, a potion to tame the senses, the sole sanctuary of good fortune. She was like the glacier from which the river of loveliness originates She was like a sleight-of-hand of Love, the great juggler

Kandarpaketu drank her in with eyes dilated through joy Sleep, becoming jealous of the vision he had seen, deserted him When he woke up he was unable to balance himself He seemed to be drowning in a sea of poison With outstretched arms he stood up, as though he were

trying to embrace the sky. He had fallen in love with the maiden and spoke to her as if she were painted in the heavens, engraved on his eyes, carved upon his heart. "Oh dearest one", he cried, "Do not go. Do not leave me in misery."

Kandarpaketu tossed restlessly in his bed. His attendants were denied entry and the doors of the chamber were shut. He refused all food and neglected his person. By day he longed for sleep, but when night came he longed for a repetition of the dream and sleep eluded him. When many days and nights passed like this, his friend Makaranda somehow gained entrance into his bedchamber. Makaranda and Kandarpaketu were devoted to each other and shared many memories of their childhood days. Seeing the miserable condition in which the prince had fallen, Makaranda was deeply afflicted. He soothed his friend and tried to divert his mind in various ways. But Kandarpaketu remained sunk in gloom. At last his friend said, "Why do you behave like this, in a manner so unbecoming to a man of honour? The world looks upon you as the embodiment of courage, patience and heroism. When people hear of your conduct they are swayed by perplexity. Good men are aggrieved while the wicked are taking advantage of your weakness and are already mocking at you. My friend, pull yourself together. Abandon this nonsense."

Kandarpaketu, wounded as he was by Cupid's arrows, somehow managed to speak. In a feeble voice he said, "My good friend, no one can help me. My mind is confused and a thousand afflictions seem to assail me. This is no time for advice. My limbs are on fire, my faculties are boiling, my heart is about to burst, my breath has almost left me and my memory has vanished. Dear Makaranda, we have played together in the dust when we were children. You have shared my sorrows and joys. Now is the time to stand by me. Do not advise, do not argue, do not console. Just get up and follow me wherever I go."

With these words Kandarpaketu abruptly got up, slipped out of the Palace and quietly left the city accompanied only by Makaranda.

III

After travelling a long distance the two friends reached the foot of the great Vindhya Mountain. The earth seemed to bend down under the weight of its thousand peaks. The Vindhya's slopes were inhabited by savages who hunted wild buffaloes. In the bowers and caves of the Vindhya many kinds of animals slumbered peacefully. Its rocky sides were cooled by fragrant breezes—fragrant because they carried the perfume of sandal trees that had been crushed to pulp by sportive elephants. In the groves monkeys sucked the sap of the palm fruit, while birds pecked at the seeds as they fell from the fruit. At the foot of the mountain there were ferocious bears and lions.

There were caverns infested by jackals and wastelands covered with white thorn-apples. The forests, rosy at dawn, were impenetrable, they were covered by tangled creepers and trees with twisted, interlaced branches. In these forests there were secret corners where nymphs assembled, marking their path with their footprints dyed with henna. The Vindhya concealed the view of the quarters as the Mimamsa and Nyaya philosophies obscure the views of the Jainas. It had delightful pools in which the blue lotus thrived luxuriantly. Around these pools there were arbours in which beautiful birds hopped from branch to branch.

The Vindhya was embraced by the Reva river, as by a dear mistress with outstretched, wavy arms. The river carried the perfume of lotus-pollen shaken by the tails of fishes. The banks of the river resounded with the mating calls of flamingoes. The gardens by the river-side saw the diversions and sports of sylphs and other unearthly beings. The shining ripples of the Reva were quickened by breezes blowing from the gardens. The Reva's winding current gave the impression that she had a tottering gait—the result of a carousal.

Kandarpaketu and Makaranda reached the bank of this delightful river and rested in the shade of a rose-apple tree. The peaks of the Vindhya became rosy. The god

whose garment is made of bright rays descended towards the western horizon, his disc red like the eyes of some mighty creature exhausted by heat Makaranda gathered from the forest fruits and nuts to sustain his royal friend and himself When they had both partaken of the humble but palatable meal, Kandarpaketu lay down on a couch of branches arranged by Makaranda He slumbered, placing the image of his dear one on the tablet of his heart, and looking on her as if she were drawn by a pencil upon his mind

In the middle of the night Kandarpaketu heard the chatter of a parrot and a *maina* on the topmost branch of the rose-apple tree The two birds seemed to be quarrelling Kandarpaketu woke his friend and the two listened with great interest to the strange conversation that went on above them

In a voice tremulous with anger the *maina* said, "You wretch, having sworn loyalty to me how dare you go about flirting with other birds! Where were you last night?" The parrot protested that he was delayed because some extraordinary events had taken place, and he had heard things which detained him The *maina's* curiosity was aroused and, urged by her, the parrot recounted his story

IV

'There is a city named Kusumapura It is inhabited by people who are generous, wealthy and wise The turrets of its mansions appear like herds of elephants floating in the sky Its squares are decorated by beautiful statues In its pleasure-houses there are courtesans who are rocked by Cupid as bees are rocked by flower-petals, and who inflame the hearts of their gallants as the king of Eagles causes anguish to the hearts of serpents In the environs of this prosperous city the blessed Ganga flows peacefully Its current is like the tide of virtue Its waters are perfumed by sandalwood juice dripping from the trees on its banks

In the city of Kusumapura there are pleasure-gardens abounding in rare trees These trees have soft young

shoots, so tender that they might well have been nourished on the ambrosia shaken by the dainty feet of the deer in the moon. The tree-tops are laden with flowers multitudinous as the hosts of stars. The city has many temples whose stately spires surge towards the clouds.

The king of this city is Srīngarasekhara, a monarch loved by the good and feared by the evil. His hands are fragrant, he seems to have dragged the goddess of fortune of his adversaries by the hair and the garlands worn by the goddess seem to have left their perfume on the king's hands. The king is just, free from envy, full of forethought, continually active, a giver of wealth and a remover of sorrow. His arms are well-shaped and faultless—they are marked only by the impress of jewelled earrings!

While Srīngarasekhara rules in Kusumapura, the only separation is the separation of cream from curds, the only shrinking is the closing of lotus-buds at twilight, the only fetters are those with which poets bind their words, the only darkness is the darkness of clouds in July, the only breaks are those that occur in changing musical modes.

The chief queen of Srīngarasekhara is Anangavati, chaste and tender like Parvati. Many years ago Anangavati bore a daughter named Vasavadatta. The princess has now reached maturity but has so far remained averse to marriage.

But a few days ago something happened to the princess. It was the season of spring—spring that intoxicates with its song and scent. The mango-buds were opening, and swarms of bees settled on them, humming softly. The lakes around the city echoed with the joyous cries of swans thrilled by the expanding lotuses. Travellers heard with delight the festive songs sung in every street. The *dhak* trees were in full bloom. The sweet humming of black-bees among jasmine-buds sounded like Cupid's trumpet-call of victory. The swarms of bees clustering round bunches of white flowers looked like sapphires woven with pearls in a necklace. The trumpet-flower seemed to be the hook with which the God of Love was fishing among the restless hearts of men.

In this season of spring, King Srngarasekhara, eager to find a worthy husband for his daughter, invited a number of princes so that Vasavadatta might make her choice. The ceremony was arranged on a lavish scale. The stage was thick with the smoke of incense. The royal suitors ridiculed each other's claims and boasted of their own qualities. Some of them were proud of their mighty armies, others of their learning, still others of their mastery of the arts. Some were hopeful, others were dejected. Vasavadatta looked at them one by one and retired from the stage with a loveless heart. Not one among the suitors, invited by her father from the far corners of the earth, pleased her.

But that very night she saw in a dream a youth of wondrous beauty. He seemed to speak in words of nectar. He was like the root of the tree of beauty, the mountain from which the stream of pleasant conversation gushes out, the mirror of the face of nobility, the seed from which knowledge sprouts, the spouse of glory, the original dwelling-place of virtue. Vasavadatta saw him and felt as though the treasure of loveliness had been unfolded before her. And in her dream a mysterious voice also told her that the youth was Kandarpaketu, son of King Chintamani.

When she woke up she was unable to think of anything else in the world. "Oh Prajapati", she exclaimed, "You have shown me the image of perfection. Cupid, eager to see the highest product of his own art, has gathered atoms of beauty from the three worlds and fashioned this prince out of them." In this way she went on recalling the charms of Kandarpaketu and longed to see him. He seemed to be engraved on her heart—inlaid, riveted, joined, cemented. He seemed to have entered into her very bones, enveloped in her breath, liquified in her blood, and circulated through her veins. Her mind was emptied of its faculties. She felt as though she had become deaf, listless, speechless. Summoning her companions, she asked them to soothe her burning body in various ways. "Dearest Anangalekha", she said, "Press my arm gently. This pain of separation is hard to bear. Oh foolish Madanamanjari, sprinkle sandal-

water—quick, I am burning Vasantasena, bind my heavy hair—they are crushing me Tarangavati, scatter fresh pollen on my temples Kantumati, wipe my teardrops—my own hands have lost the strength to do so And you, gentle Chitralekha! Please trace in a picture the thief of my thoughts Alas, why did the Creator give my body anything apart from eyes? If all its parts had been organs of vision I would have seen my beloved more fully Good Sleep, will you never visit me again? Oh Cupid, I beseech you, do not spare the man of my dreams Oh West Wind, blow where you will, it makes no difference to me—my life is ebbing away ”

With these words Vasavadatta lost her consciousness When her friends revived her with cool camphor-water, she sat in the shade of a tree on the bank of a pool Her restlessness would not let her remain at one spot She shifted to a plantain-grove whose leaves were swaying gently in the breeze, and then to a couch of flowers Her body was consumed with fire as though the rays of the twelve suns, arisen at the moment of the world's destruction, were scorching her She spent some time in this condition and then despatched her confidante, Tamalika, to observe the feelings of Kandarpaketu This Tamalika has accompanied me to this spot and is standing right here beneath the tree ’

Such was the parrot's story Having heard his account the *maina* was satisfied that he had just cause for delay And so she forgave him

V

Kandarpaketu, having heard the conversation of the two birds, was overwhelmed with joy, as if he had dived in the ocean of ambrosia He looked for Tamalika, and, having found her, impatiently made enquiries about Vasavadatta Assured of her love, Kandarpaketu and Makaranda, accompanied by Tamalika, started for Kusumapura

The sun was setting It looked like a jewel in the hood

of Vasuki, the primeval serpent. Slowly plunging into the western horizon, the sun looked like Siva's begging-bowl. It was evening. Tree-tops were tuneful with the notes of sparrows. Children, soothed by the delicate fingers of their mothers, were already slumbering. The gossip of old men was being interrupted by young folk clamouring for poetic tales. Crows were eager to return home. The inner apartments were steeped in the fragrance of aloes. Hermits had started their evening devotions. Owls were stepping out of the hollows of old trees. The peacocks had ascended their perches. The courtesans were putting finishing touches to their alluring toilet.

Gradually the evening advanced into night. The lotuses folded themselves up. The bees groped for a way out of the clusters of flowers. The night was dark, like Siva's throat blackened by the poison that he drank after the ocean was churned. The darkness was increased by the columns of smoke that arose from oblations. The night was like a comrade to every evil-doer; it was like a mantle for fair ones on their way to secret assignations. It seemed to tremble among the heavy tresses of brunettes.

By and by the stars shone forth, scattered like drops of the Ganga's water as she wanders among the matted locks of Siva. The stars were like masses of foam dripping from the mouths of the heavenly steeds weary after dragging the sun's chariot all day long, they were like a grove of white lotuses in the great ocean of the sky, like globules on the flowery arrow of Cupid, like pearls in the necklace of Laxmi.

Then the moon arose, like a heavenly ball with which Night, the wayward princess, diverted herself. The moon was like a golden mirror for the God of Love, like a bunch of coral flowers on the eastern mount, like a ball of saffron served in a heavenly banquet. It was like Cupid's dainty, white umbrella, like the round ivory hilt of the great sword of night, like the resplendent egg of a black serpent, like a white lotus coursing in the heavens, like a ball of mercury poured out by the celestial metallurgist, like a dove on the turret of a palace in the heavens, like the crystalline fan with

which Cupid quickens the fire of separation

When the moon was about to set, Kandarpaketu and Makaranda approached the city of Kusumapura, while the breeze blew like the sighing of the night. The travellers saw the encircling wall and were amazed by its height and sturdiness. They came nearer and gazed upon the palace, with its facade of gold, pearls, emeralds and rubies. Many-coloured banners fluttered in the sky. Streams of pure water flowed through courtyards of marble. The palace doves slumbered peacefully on slabs of crystal. There were pavilions made of the purest ivory. Parrots in golden cages were trying to imitate the chatter of maidens.

Admiring these sights, Kandarpaketu advanced inside the palace and suddenly came face to face with Vasavadatta. For a moment the two gazed into each other's eyes and then both fainted away through excess of joy.

When attendants had revived them with cooling lotions, Vasavadatta's dearest companion, Kalavati, addressed the prince in this way: "Oh noble hero! this is no occasion for leisurely conversation. You don't know the situation in its entirety. The pain that has been endured by this maiden through her love for you cannot be described in a thousand ages even if Brahma were to be the writer, the ocean an inkpot, and the sky the paper. You, too, have abandoned your kingdom and exposed yourself to peril and suffering. But we have no time for consoling each other. King Sringarasekhara has decided that tomorrow morning Vasavadatta must be wedded to Puspaketu, the prince of the Vidyadharas. She had made up her mind to enter fire if Tamalika had not escorted you here tonight."

Leaving his comrade, Makaranda, behind him, Kandarpaketu lost no time in escaping from the city along with his beloved Vasavadatta. They passed through a cemetery and heard the horrible sound of bursting skulls. They heard weird screams and had fleeting glimpses of unearthly creatures. But they continued their journey and at last emerged in an open spot.

The night passed. The host of stars, like a mass of carp,

that he had indeed lost her, he gave vent to loud lamentation and wandered about like one distraught "Dearest Vasavadatta", he exclaimed, "Where are you? What kind of jest is this? Can you imagine what pain you make me endure? Friend Makaranda, I wish you could see how fate is playing with me Alas, is this the result of my evil dreams or of my ancestors' displeasure? What have I done to deserve this? Have I not diligently studied the sciences? Have I not respected my teachers? Have I ever been indifferent to the Gods? Have I ever neglected the sacrificial fire? Beloved Vasavadatta, how can I live without you?"

Bewailing in this manner Kandarpaketu entered a forest by the sea-shore Its trees were wet with showers of honey dripping from bee-hives smashed by playful monkeys In this forest there was an abundance of palmyra palms, dates, coconuts and other trees There were clumps of camphor, ebony, coral, and rose-apple There were marshlands covered with tall reeds where cranes sang merrily Mango trees were vibrant with the calling of nightingales The nests of woodcocks swayed among the branches Hollow trunks of bark trees had themselves become the homes for silk-cotton trees And, in more secluded spots, undismayed antelopes drank at pools, herds of wild buffalo chewed their cud, while young rabbits rested comfortably on rocks smooth as marble The fawns listened spell-bound to the songs of tree-goddesses Lions walked at a leisurely pace, their golden manes flowing proudly Elephants were drowsy through the lulling rumble of distant waterfalls

Passing through the forest Kandarpaketu reached the ocean whose waves were like the movements of Siva's frantic dance It seemed to have been fashioned out of the atoms of a million moons. It was like a bowl of cosmetic for the self-adornment of Laxmi Drops of water descending from its sprays looked like pearls and tempted the birds Many winged creatures hovered around Crocodiles and whales emerged and vanished from sight On the shore the soft moss was trampled upon by playful mermaids

was removed by the black fisherman casting his net of darkness in the great ocean of the sky The lotus-grove looked like a mendicant clothed in red robes, the lotus fibres were like his holy book, and the sound of intoxicated butterflies was like the mendicant's mystical utterance The bees were like seeds of blackness sown by a farmer in the field of white flowers The earth seemed to offer to the sun high-stalked white lotuses standing erect like incense-burners The moon had lost its glory, it was like a mortar broken by the incessant blows of the pestle of dawn And the stars vanished like grain scattered in the threshing pit

It seemed as though the moon, like a fruit, had fallen because the day, like a ruddy-faced monkey, had climbed the tree of heaven The sun was in the ascendent Its disc was like a splash of blood from the elephant of darkness struck by a lion's paw It was bright like a heap of rubies pounded by the hard hoofs of lofty steeds, like a jar of molten iron, like a golden urn placed on the rampart of Heaven It was like a glowing bud on the topmost branch of the sapphire tree of paradise, like the dazzling-red entrance-curtain of the actor, Time

Tired by their exertion, and oppressed by the heat of the sun, Kandarpaketu and Vasavadatta were unable to proceed further Luckily, they found a bower of creepers and, with every sense benumbed, the two weary travellers fell asleep

VI

The sun was now at the height of his glory and displayed his brilliance as a merchant exhibits his brocades Every quarter of the heavens was lit up as though a mighty forest were on fire Kandarpaketu, having slept soundly for some hours, woke up He discovered that his companion was not by his side He looked for her in every part of the bower, he parted the drapery of creepers and peeped into every possible hiding place He even looked among the branches of trees, and below the heaps of dry leaves At last, realising

that he had indeed lost her, he gave vent to loud lamentation and wandered about like one distraught "Dearest Vasavadatta", he exclaimed, "Where are you? What kind of jest is this? Can you imagine what pain you make me endure? Friend Makaranda, I wish you could see how fate is playing with me Alas, is this the result of my evil dreams or of my ancestors' displeasure? What have I done to deserve this? Have I not diligently studied the sciences? Have I not respected my teachers? Have I ever been indifferent to the Gods? Have I ever neglected the sacrificial fire? Beloved Vasavadatta, how can I live without you?"

Bewailing in this manner Kandarpaketu entered a forest by the sea-shore Its trees were wet with showers of honey dripping from bee-hives smashed by playful monkeys In this forest there was an abundance of palmyra palms, dates, coconuts and other trees There were clumps of camphor, ebony, coral, and rose-apple There were marshlands covered with tall reeds where cranes sang merrily Mango trees were vibrant with the calling of nightingales The nests of woodcocks swayed among the branches Hollow trunks of bark trees had themselves become the homes for silk-cotton trees And, in more secluded spots, undismayed antelopes drank at pools, herds of wild buffalo chewed their cud, while young rabbits rested comfortably on rocks smooth as marble The fawns listened spell-bound to the songs of tree-goddesses Lions walked at a leisurely pace, their golden manes flowing proudly Elephants were drowsy through the lulling rumble of distant waterfalls

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Eagles circling in the sky suddenly swooped down upon their prey. In the ocean there were eddies and whirlpools, as though the process of churning, initiated at the beginning of creation, had slowed down but not yet completely stopped. The restless waves gave the impression that the wine of perfume from the trees on its shore had gone to the ocean's head. The ocean seemed to be epileptic when it foamed at the mouth, it seemed angry when it roared and frowned; distressed when it sighed.

To Kandarpaketu, however, the ocean appeared as a friend. He reflected, 'Fate has wrought me many injuries. But now, at last by bringing me to the shore of this ocean, destiny has shown great consideration. I need not wander any more. I can abandon my body here. Let the ocean quench the fire of separation.' With these thoughts he was about to fling himself into the mighty ocean when he heard a voice from heaven. "Noble Kandarpaketu", said the heavenly voice, "Do not be hasty. Do not abandon your life. You shall be united with your dear one at no distant time."

Hearing these words Kandarpaketu gave up his resolve to die and resumed his wanderings. Eager to sustain his body, he roamed about from place to place in search of fruit and herbs.

VII

The rainy season had arrived. Rivers overflowed their banks. Peacocks danced at eventide. The rain quelled the expanse of dust as a great ascetic quells the tide of passion. The *chataka* birds were happy. Lightning shone like a bejewelled boat of Love in the pleasure-pool of the sky, it was like a garland for the gate of the palace of paradise, like a lustrous girdle for some heavenly beauty, like a row of nail-marks left upon the cloud by its lover, the departing day.

The rain was like a chess player, while yellow and green frogs were like chessmen jumping in the enclosures of the irrigated fields. Hailstones flashed like pearls from the

necklaces of heavenly birds By and by, the rainy season yielded to autumn, the season of bright dawns, of parrots rummaging among rice-stalks, of fugitive clouds In autumn the lakes echoed with the sound of herons The frogs were silent and the snakes shrivelled up At night the stars were unusually bright and the moon was like a pale beauty

In this season of autumn Kandarpaketu, in the course of his wanderings, came upon a stone image in an obscure part of the forest The image reminded him of Vasavadatta and, agitated by memories, he touched the stone with his hand Immediately the image rose up and assumed the living form of Vasavadatta When Kandarpaketu had recovered from the shock of surprise, he embraced her fondly and said, "Vasavadatta, my mind is reeling Tell me whether this is a dream "

Vasavadatta sighed fervently and said "Lord of my life, that day while you were sleeping in the bower, exhausted by hunger, I was plunged in grief at the thought of the suffering that I had brought upon you Sleep eluded me Seeing your emaciated form, I felt impelled to gather fruits for you so that, awakening from your slumber, you might have some refreshment So I entered the deep woods As I was looking for fruit trees, I stumbled upon a military camp Grass huts were being camouflaged, fodder bags were being arranged, tents were being pitched The courtesans' quarters were being set up and flags were being secured to standards I was frightened by the neighing of horses and ran in the opposite direction

But from the other side another army advanced and very soon a mighty battle ensued The place at which the armies clashed belonged to a hermitage When the dust of battle covered the horizon, and mangled corpses were strewn on the ground, the ascetic who presided over the hermitage came there in great fury When he saw me, he concluded that I was the prize for which the armies had fought He cursed me 'Wretched woman,' he thundered, 'You have brought all this destruction to my peaceful hermitage You shall turn into a stone ' But when he saw my distress

and was convinced of my innocence, he relented. He now decreed that the curse would terminate when the stone was touched by your noble hand. And now this has come about."

Kandarpaketu was in transports of joy. While he was consoling Vasavadatta for all that she had suffered, Makaranda arrived. Kandarpaketu's happiness was now complete. The three of them journeyed home by easy stages. Having reached his own palace Kandarpaketu, along with Vasavadatta, tasted such bliss as few mortals are destined to enjoy.

Kadambari

BANABHATTA
Early Seventh Century A D

BANABHATTA'S fame rests on two works. *Harshacharita*, a laudatory account of his patron, King Harshavardhana, and *Kadambari*, which has come to represent the very essence of the story-teller's art, so much so that the word 'kadambari' is itself often used in the sense of 'a novel'.

Harshavardhana died in 648 A D, and it is known that *Kadambari* was composed in the last years of his reign, if not after his death. The literary activity of Banabhatta can therefore be assigned to the middle decades of the seventh century.

The plot of *Kadambari* is exceedingly complicated and involved. Long narratives are interrupted by flash-backs, and these lead to still longer narratives. There are endless digressions, and the major portion of the story is put in a parrot's mouth. It has been rightly objected that "no reader can carry in his head a figment of this kind through a romance of four hundred pages".

But all these shortcomings are readily forgiven when we think of Banabhatta's brilliant descriptions, his picturesque imagery, his lively imagination, his beautifully worked out metaphors and his deep sensitiveness

to the life of nature. He handles his characters with great skill. Even the minor figures are lively and consistent. They fill their roles with perfect naturalness, and their presence never appears superfluous.

Banabhatta's sympathies are broad. He shows profound understanding of the human emotions, and especially of the joys and tribulations that spring from love. His treatment of love is free from the remotest suggestion of anything that might be considered gross or coarse. In Kadambari, the emphasis is always placed on the finer and the more ennobling aspects of love. Mahashweta's passion has a flame-like purity, and her sorrow a cleansing power, that prepare the reader psychologically for the appearance of the heroine. And when the princess of the Gandharvas arrives on the scene, she brings with her a freshness, a tenderness and a spontaneous grace that are utterly disarming.

Kadambari

I

THERE was once a great king named Shudraka who rose in fresh splendour every day, like the sun. He was an upholder of the moral law and never failed to offer sacrifices whenever they were due. He was the source of all the arts and the home of all virtue. He was the ambrosial spring of poesy. To his friends he was like the sunrise, but to his foes he was a dire comet. All men of taste found in him a ready ally. But the haughty cut no ice with him.

In his reign banners alone trembled, and songs alone showed variations. The only fetters were the fetters of prosody, the only deception was in dreams, and the only care was that concerning good conduct. Elephants alone were rampant, lattice-windows alone had ensnaring mesh-work. Shudraka's subjects never deserted their homes—though, of course, chessmen had to leave their empty squares! The only tears were those caused by the smoke of sacrificial fire, and the sound of the lash came only when horses were whipped into speed.

One day, as the king sat in his audience-hall, a female messenger approached him gracefully and, placing her knees humbly upon the ground, said, "Sir, there is at the palace-gate a *Chandala* maiden from the south. She has brought with her a parrot which she claims to be a veritable marvel. She begs permission to present the bird to you."

The king's curiosity was aroused and, being in a leisurely

mood, he said, "Why not? let her be admitted " Very soon the *Chandala* maiden was ushered into the royal presence. She saw the king surrounded by a thousand chieftains, like golden-peaked Meru surrounded by lesser Himalayan snowpeaks. He sat on a couch encrusted with moonstones. Above him was a silken canopy, white like the foam of the heavenly river. Its jewelled pillars were kept together by chains of gold, entwined with strings of pearls. His left foot rested on a footstool of crystal, as if the moon had bent down in humiliation before the beauty of his countenance. His limbs were tinged with blue from the reflected light of the sapphire pavement, as if darkened by the sighs of his defeated enemies.

The *Chandala* maiden was for a moment overwhelmed by the king's splendid appearance. Then she advanced with tinkling bracelets and struck the mosaic floor with her staff. She was accompanied by a man hoary with age and yet strong in every limb. Behind them was a *Chandala* boy with long hair falling on each shoulder. He carried a parrot in a cage, and although the bars of the cage were made of gold they shone like emerald through the reflection of the parrot's plumage. The maiden was dressed in a blue garment which reached upto her ankle, and wore a veil of red silk—a combination glorious like the evening sunshine falling on a pool of blue lotuses. Her white ear-rings were suspended on her dark cheeks, as if the face of Night were adorned by the rays of the rising moon. She had reached the flower of her youth and was at the height of beauty. The king reflected in amazement. 'The Creator's ways are indeed beyond prediction! With a form that scorns the accumulated loveliness of the Universe, why was she born in a *Chandala* race?'

While the king was thus wrapped in wonder, the maiden stepped on the mosaic floor and made a sign to her attendant who pointed to the parrot and said, "Sir, here is Vaishampayana, the parrot, who knows the meaning of all the *Shastras* and who is well versed in royal policy, history and mythology. He has a perfect command over musical intervals. He recites poems and narrates romances composed

by himself His witticisms will hold you spellbound He can play on the *Veena*, the flute and the drum He is familiar with the characteristics of elephants, horses and other animals He knows all the movements of classical dance, has a perfect knowledge of histrionics, and is a skilful painter He even knows how to pacify a maiden's anger in a love-quarrel Oh King, all gems belong naturally to you, as the pearls belong to the ocean That is why this maiden, who is the daughter of the king of *Chandalas*, has brought Vaishampayana to you as a gift Pray accept it and gratify us "

The attendant placed the cage before the king and retired The parrot raised his right foot, hailed the king, and recited a song of his own composition The king turned in amazement towards his minister, Kumarapalita, and said, "Counsellor, did you hear the bird's clear rendering of consonants? Did you mark the sweetness and grace of his intonation? Never have I witnessed a marvel to compare with this Such a combination of correctness and elegance may well be the envy of the most accomplished poets and musicians "

While the king was praising the parrot in this way, the midday conch sounded The king dismissed all his courtiers The hour of bathing was at hand The sound of anklets was heard on all sides as fan-bearers and other female attendants hastily left the audience-hall The king ordered Vaishampayana to be taken into the inner apartments and proceeded to the bathing pavilion

When he laid aside his ornaments, it seemed as if the sun had divested itself of its rays, or the sky had become bare of moon and stars Having taken pleasant exercise for a while he entered the bathing place It had a gold bath filled with perfumed water A crystal bathing-seat was placed by its side Beautifully decorated pitchers stood on one side, full of fragrant water Some of the handmaidens held small silver pitchers in their hands and poured out fresh perfumes Bards sang appropriate songs in the background Musicians played on various instruments The king bathed, dressed in a robe of fine silk, and was anointed

with sandalwood paste. Then, having partaken of a light meal and taken his betel, he entered his chamber. He reclined on a couch and conversed with his intimate companions.

After a while, curious to learn the parrot's story, he sent for Vaishampayana. When the bird was brought into his presence the king asked him, "Well, my dear fellow, have you been properly fed and bathed? Is everything to your taste?" The parrot replied, "Your Majesty, what have I not eaten! I have had my fill of the juice of *jambu* fruits. I have cracked the seeds of blood-red pomegranates. I have pecked at grapes and played with lotus shoots. But is it necessary to describe the delicacies that I have tasted? Everything touched by the hands of your beautiful queens turns into ambrosia."

The king cut him short and said, "Enough of all this. Now tell me of your birth and adventures, your parentage and education. I am eager to know all about you. How did you come to acquire such deep knowledge of the scriptures? Are you dwelling in disguise or is this your true form? And how did you fall into the hands of a *Chandala* maiden? Tell me everything."

Vaishampayana said, "Sir, the story is a long one. But, if such be your pleasure, hear it." And then the parrot narrated the history of his former life.

II

In the region of the Vindhya mountains there is a forest abounding in beautiful trees, damp with the ichor of wild elephants. Its bowers are dark and shady, and its pools are full to the brim with cool water.

In this forest, not far from the hermitage of sage Agastya, there is a lotus-lake called Pampa. It is like a second ocean made by the Creator as the home of all that is peerless. On the bank of this lake, near a clump of palms, there is a large silk-cotton tree. Its roots are always encircled by an ancient snake as by the trunk of a mighty elephant. Its

countless branches, spreading through the firmament, seem to imitate the thousand arms of Siva, outstretched in his wild dance. Through the weight of its years the tree seems to lean for support on the shoulder of the wind. The creepers that cling to its trunk stand out like the swollen veins of old age. On the topmost branches of this tree there are wisps of cotton which look like the foam dripping from the panting mouths of the sun's horses. This tree is like a temple from where the gods of the forest look out upon the Universe.

In this tree thousands of parrots had once made their homes. They had settled upon the boughs, in the crevices, in the holes of the rotting bark and among the hollows. Concealed by the dense foliage of this lord of the forest, the parrots lived peacefully. They spent the nights in their own nests and at dawn formed delightful lines in the sky. When the flock was on the wing, it seemed like a moving floor of emeralds. Their progress in the sky seemed to fashion a grassy path stretching through to heaven. After gathering their food they returned to their young ones, their beaks dripping with the juice of fruits.

In one of the old hollows of this tree my parents, too, had made their dwelling. Fate decreed that I should be an only child and, to my father's everlasting sorrow, my mother lost her life in the pains of child-birth. My father devoted himself wholly to my nurture. Owing to his advanced age, his wings had lost their power of flight and hung loose from his shoulders. When he shook them, it seemed that he was trying to shake off the painful old age that clung to his body. He was unable to wander far, and had to content himself with bits of fruit torn down by other parrots. Now and again he picked up grains of rice fallen from other nests, with a beak worn thin through a lifetime of effort in breaking the hard seeds of various fruits. He could collect very little, and subsisted on whatever was left over after feeding me.

One day I suddenly heard the tumult of a hunting expedition. The night was nearing its end. The moon, like

an old swan with its wings reddened by lotus honey, had descended to the shore of the western ocean. The lions were yawning. Inspired by the flapping of the elephants' ears, the peacocks were beginning to dance. The sun had risen and was playing among the tree-tops around the Pampa lake. Groups of parrots had already left the tree in search of food. My father was still in his own nest and I nestled close to him. At that moment the sound of the chase descended upon us like a thunderbolt. It terrified every creature of the forest and was soon mingled with the shrieks of frightened elephants. By and by the noise was swollen by the roar of lions awakened from their sleep in mountain caves. The entire forest trembled as the hunters shouted to each other and pursued the fleeing beasts. The deer cried piteously as their young ones were torn by the hounds from limb to limb. Birds circled overhead in confusion uttering strange sounds, while woodland nymphs fled in terror.

As the tumult slowly subsided I plucked up courage and peeped out of the tree-trunk. I saw an army of *shabaras* filling the forest with their awesome forms. It was as though all the nights of the dark fortnight had been rolled into one, as though all the curses uttered by angry hermits had congealed into bodily form, as though a huge mass of black clouds upon a mountain-peak had been suddenly broken into bits by a terrific blow from a lion's paw. The *shabaras* numbered many thousands and the earth was darkened by their advance.

At the head of this great army I saw their leader, Matanga. Though still in his early youth, he was hard as if made of iron. He had a well-grown beard and his thick curly locks hung upon his shoulders like a lion's mane. He was broad of brow, stern of nose. His left side shone with the rays of a jewelled snake's hood with which he had adorned one of his ears. He seemed to dye the steps with his blood-shot eyes, as though shedding a twilight of doom for all living creatures. His mighty arms reached down to his knees; they seemed to have been made to the measure of an ele-

phant's trunk His legs were strong, his shoulders rough with scars He was accompanied by hounds of every colour Their lolling tongues, though dry with fatigue, seemed by their natural pinkness to be dripping with the blood of deer These hounds were trained in the art of initiating does into the state of widowhood

Matanga was followed by *shabaras*, some of whom carried tiger-skins Others held peacocks' tails, still others flaunted elephant-tusks When I saw this mighty army, I reflected 'The life of these men is full of folly, and their career utterly blameworthy Their only religion is offering of human flesh to Durga Hunting is their only exercise, the cry of the jackal is their only *Shastra* Dogs are their bosom friends, their feast is a drinking bout, their kingdom is in weird and deserted places and their wives are captives taken in battles Their livelihood is by theft and cruelty, and the hoods of snakes are their only ornaments'

As I was thinking in this manner Matanga approached the very tree in which we had our home. He sat down under the tree on a seat of twigs hastily made ready by his servants He was served with freshly-plucked lotus-fibres which he devoured greedily After he had eaten he drank the cool, aromatic water fetched from the lake by one of his followers. Matanga rested for a while and then, rising with fresh energy, continued his progress through the forest along with his followers.

But one of the *shabaras* lingered on. Apparently he had gone without his share of deer-flesh and his demonic expression proclaimed his desire for meat. As soon as others had vanished from sight this barbarian looked up at the tree and his mouth watered at the sight of so many parrots. He reckoned up the number of nests in the tree and chuckled at the thought of the destruction he was about to wreak. Then he started climbing the tree without the slightest difficulty. He grabbed the young parrots from the boughs one by one as if they were fruit. Some were only a few days old others were ne-born birds that looked like cotton flowers, still others with their wings

just sprouting, were like fresh lotus-leaves. He pitilessly slew them all and cast them upon the ground.

My father trembled at the destruction that he saw. His limbs quivered and his eyes were vacant through fear of death. His palate was dry and his joints paralysed. He covered me with his wings and held me to his breast. Slowly that brute of a *shabara* approached our nest and thrust his left arm inside. It was dreadful like the body of an old black snake, and redolent with the raw fat of a wild boar that he had slain. My father struck out helplessly with his beak and moaned piteously. But the murderous wretch dragged him down and crushed him. I was so small that my body was curled into a ball through fear and, concealed by my father's wings, I escaped the *shabara's* attention. He wrung my father's neck and threw him down. I slowly emerged from the shelter of my father's wings, protective even in death. Heartless wretch that I was, I saved myself instead of joining my father in the world beyond. I tottered along with the help of my feeble wings and came to the foot of a *tamala* tree. The *shabara* climbed down the tree, gathered up the parrots lying dead on the ground, packed them hastily in a basket of leaves, secured the basket with a coil of creepers, and went his way.

The craving for life is natural to all created beings. My life went on shamefully and, in spite of my consuming grief for my father's death, I longed for water to sustain my failing breath. The distant notes of the cranes told me that the lake was far away. My limbs were weary. I despaired of ever reaching the brink of water. But at that very moment a youthful hermit happened to pass that way. His countenance was so pure and bright that he seemed to have dropped from the rising sun. His limbs seemed to have been fashioned from lightning and his entire form painted with molten gold. He carried a bright crystal rosary, and a black antelope skin hung from his shoulders. In his right hand there was a staff on which was adjusted a leafy basket full of the flowers he had gathered for the worship of Siva. He was followed by a tame deer from the hermitage.

The ascetic noticed me and was filled with pity. He picked me up and carried me to the edge of the lake. Lifting my head, he made me drink a few drops of cool water. When I had recovered my breath he placed me in the life-giving shade of a fresh lotus-leaf. Then he went through the ritual of bath and prayer. Having finished his oblations he donned a pure white robe, adjusted his top-knot, and carried me to the hermitage where he lived.

In this hermitage Jabali, the great sage, had his *ashrama*. Young pupils were muttering Vedic hymns. The peacocks were hearing with delight the sound of the filling of pitchers. Parched grain was being scattered in the yards around the huts. The balls of rice offered to deities were being devoured by cocks of the forest. The aroma of half-cooked sacrificial cakes filled the atmosphere. The air was resonant with the cackle of fire-wood. Bark garments were being washed, lotus-seeds dried and fuel stacked for future use.

In this *ashrama* everything was pure and sacred. There was sharpness only in blades of grass, not in dispositions. There was wavering only among plantain leaves swaying in the wind, but there was no wavering in minds. Necks were clasped—but only of pitchers. Love of dance prevailed only among peacocks, monkeys alone showed a 'desire for fruit', and only the roots of banyan trees had a downward tendency.

As I was admiring the hermitage, my eyes were purified by the sight of Jabali who sat in a quiet corner, surrounded by his disciples. I reflected: 'Happy is Goddess Saraswati who dwells in the serene mind of this sage. The depths of his soul are unfathomable. All the sciences become pure when they reach him, as the muddy rivers of the rainy season become pure when autumn arrives. The wind itself seems to approach him timidly and hardly disturbs the folds of his robe. The sage Jabali is a constant stream of sympathy, the bridge over the ocean of transitory existence, the reservoir of patience, the ocean of the nectar of contentment, the root of the tree of endurance, the rim of the wheel of wisdom. He is like an axe for the creepers of desire, the

staff of the flag of virtue. He is like a potent charm against the snakes of anger and greed. Through the grace of this holy man the hermitage is free from envy and conflict. Here even the animals have abandoned their feuds. Here a snake, weary of basking in the sun, playfully enters a peacock's tail, and the peacock does not mind. Here a young antelope fearlessly plays about with tiger cubs. A lion closes his eyes and derives pleasure when his mane is pulled by young elephants who mistake it for lotus fibres. Here even the monkeys have shed their capriciousness; they dutifully gather fruits for the hermits. Why, even the trees, clad in bark and adorned with flowery garlands, look like fellow ascetics of this holy man.

As I was lost in these reflections the hermit who had rescued me addressed the sage and said, "Sir, I found this little parrot fallen from his nest. He was faint with heat and lay in the dust shaken by his fall. There was hardly any life left in him. As I could not replace him in his nest I have brought him here. Let him live with us while he is weak and unable to fly. We shall feed him on the juice of fruits and on tender grains of rice. When his wings are ready to take him into the open sky he will go where he pleases. But it is possible that, learning to love us, he may elect to stay on in this hermitage."

Jabali heard these remarks and then directed his calm but penetrating glance at me. With his head bent slightly he gazed upon me as if trying to recognize me. After a while he said, "He is only reaping the fruit of his own conduct." At these words all the hermits, aware of his power and wisdom, became curious to know the history of my former birth. They said, "Sir, please tell us what misconduct has brought upon this parrot all the suffering that he has endured. What was he in his former birth? We are eager to know about him."

The saint replied, "The story of this wonderful parrot is a long one. The day is almost over. The time of the evening prayer approaches. Later on, when you are resting quietly, I shall tell you the entire story from beginning

to end Meanwhile let some one attend to the poor bird
Let him be properly fed and housed "

The glow of evening faded and gradually vanished
The sun glided from the sky, pink as a dove's foot His
orb, with its network of crimson rays, was now like the
lotus of Vishnu, recumbent on his couch of water Twilight
sprang up like rosy coral from the western horizon The
hermitage became the home of quiet thought The only sound
heard was that of milking the cows Making sure that the
sun had gone to rest, the Lord of the Night, in pure serenity
of light, wrapped in the whiteness of gossamer, made his
appearance When half a watch of the night was over the
hermit who had picked me up, unable to restrain his
eagerness any longer, went to Jabali again Other hermits
joined him in entreating the sage to relate the story of my
former birth

And this is what Jabali said

III

Who has not heard of Ujjayini, the proudest gem among all
the cities of earth? Siva created it as a worthy abode for
himself Ujjayini is never enveloped in darkness, nor is
there any need of lamps, so luminous are the jewels of its
women The home of splendour, the greatest glory of the
golden age, the source of wealth and happiness, Ujjayini is
indeed a marvel among human habitations

In this city there was a great king named Tarapida
who had conquered the earth by the might of his arm
He was wise and resolute, with an intellect ever devoted to
study His brilliance and glory made him a third luminary
alongside the sun and the moon From him proceeded
all virtues like a flock of white swans emerging from the
Himalayan snowlands While he ruled, truth was secure and
holy men received honour None dared to face him except
his own mirror Nothing was eclipsed except the sun and
the moon, nothing was dependent except the suffixes of
compound words

The king had a minister, Shukanasa by name, skilled in all the precepts of politics, the very castle of constancy. Shukanasa and the king were bound with ties of deep affection grown since the early years of childhood. After reigning happily for a few years Tarapida shifted the burdens of state to the shoulders of Shukanasa and gave himself up to a life of comfort and pleasure. There was, however, a source of great sorrow in his life. His queen, Vilsasavati, had borne him no progeny. She was the fairest ornament of his palace. She was to him what the shore is to the ocean, the creeper to the tree, lotus clusters to a lake, flowers to the spring and stars to the sky. Tarapida loved her and, seeing her pine for a child, was himself weighed down by gloom.

One day he saw her seated on a couch weeping bitterly, surrounded by her companions, also mute in grief. Her silken garment was wet with tears, her tresses were in disorder. The king exclaimed in an anxious voice, "My Queen, why thus weeping, voiceless and heavy with oppression? Why are your eye-lashes stringing a net of pearls? Why are your jewelled anklets deprived of the touch of your feet? Have I done any wrong, or has any of the attendants failed in his duty towards you?"

The queen was silent, but one of her companions plucked up courage to say, "My Lord, how could any wrong, however trifling, proceed from you? And how could any one dare to offend your queen? For a long time she has grieved because her marriage has not proved fruitful. She tries to conceal her sorrow, but today she heard in the temple a verse from the scriptures which says 'No bright future awaits those deprived of progeny. A son alone can deliver the parents from darkness.' Ever since she heard these words she is inconsolable. We have failed to soothe her."

The king tried to cheer her as best as he could. He reminded her that it was not for mortals to question the decrees of fate. He exhorted her to redouble her attention to the gods and the *gurus*, to be ever more mindful of the laws of hospitality and duty. From that time onward

Vilasavati became more and more devoted to the propitiation of gods. She honoured the Brahmmins, paid reverence to all holy persons and redoubled her charities. She bathed in all the renowned snake-ponds of the kingdom, worshipped all the sacred trees, and paid homage to wandering ascetics. She invited reciters of holy books to her palace and imbibed all the lessons of the epics. She honoured the fortune-tellers, and with her own hands made offerings of grains of rice to the birds who visited her terraces. She tied strings of medicinal herbs to her arms as amulets.

A few days passed. Then one night, when the sky was gray like the wings of an aging pigeon, and when the stars were taking their leave one by one, King Tarapida had a wonderful dream. He saw the full moon entering the mouth of Vilasavati like a ball of lotus-fibres going into an elephant's trunk. As soon as he woke up he called Shukanasa and described what he had seen. The minister was filled with joy and said, "Your Majesty, our wishes are about to be fulfilled. I, too, have seen a dream a few moments ago. It seemed to me that a white-robed Brahmin, godlike of bearing and serene of aspect, placed in the lap of my wife, Manorama, a wonderful lotus dripping with honey. These auspicious omens seen by us are harbingers of happiness. You will get a son, a leader among all the royal sages that have ever appeared upon the earth. And he will gladden your heart as the lotus-pool in autumn gladdens the royal elephant."

Shukanasa's words came true. In course of time Vilasavati gave birth to a son. The king, commemorating the dream in which the moon had appeared, gave to the prince the name of Chandrapida. Shukanasa's wife, Manorama, also delivered a son. He was named Vaishampayana.

IV

Chandrapida and Vaishampayana grew up together. All the ceremonies appropriate to childhood were performed by their parents with due regard to religion. When the

time came to initiate the prince into the life of scholarship, King Tarapida had a Palace of Learning built outside the city. It stretched half a league along the river. It was surrounded by a wall of white marble, with a great moat running outside. It was provided with stables for horses and sheds for palanquins. A gymnasium was constructed and placed in charge of renowned athletes. In this Palace of Learning the king brought together teachers of every science, and Chandrapida was placed under their care. He was like a young lion in a cage, with every allurements removed and with his mind free from every distraction.

The prince began to acquire knowledge of all the *Shastras*. The efforts of his teachers were quickened by his own great powers. The whole range of arts and sciences assembled in his mind as in a pure jewelled mirror. He acquired the highest skill in grammar, law, prosody and diplomacy. He learned to handle the bow, the scimitar, the shield, the battle-axe and other weapons. He mastered the laws of dance and music laid down by Bharata and other teachers of antiquity. He acquired dexterity in painting, calligraphy, testing of jewels, working in ivory and playing upon cymbal, lute, pipe and other instruments. He learnt architecture, engineering and mechanics. He became familiar with foreign languages, and was thoroughly initiated into the epics, the scriptures, ancient chronicles, narrative poems and drama.

Along with these mental disciplines he also acquired great physical prowess. When he playfully pulled the ears of young elephants their limbs shook through the weight of his muscles. With a single stroke of his scimitar he could cut down full-grown palm-trees as if they were lotus stalks. For his exercise he used an iron club which could only be lifted by ten men.

Vaishampayana also progressed in body and mind and became a close second to his royal companion. The two became inseparable and there was absolute confidence between them. Chandrapida could not do without Vaishampayana for a moment, and the latter followed him cease-

lessly as the day follows the sun Chandrapida's limbs acquired fullness, like the wishes of his friends, his waist became slender, like the armies of rival kings, his form broadened, like his liberality, his majesty grew, like his hair, his eyes became bright, like his conduct, and his heart became deep, like his own voice

When the prince's education was complete King Tarapida sent one of his trusted counsellors, Balahaka, with this message 'My son, you have fulfilled all our hopes You have studied the *Shastras*, mastered the sciences and perfected the arts Your teachers report that you are fit to leave the house of learning Now let people see you like a royal elephant emerging from the enclosure You are in the sixteenth year of your life Come out and gratify the eyes of the world Pay your respects to all the chiefs of the kingdom, do honour to the Brahmuns and protect your people I send you a horse worthy to bear your weight This horse, Indrayudha by name, is swift like Garuda, the king of eagles He is tireless like the wind The emperor of Persia has sent him to me as a gift Ride this horse, my son, and come back to the city'

When Balahaka had delivered this message, Prince Chandrapida bowed his head as a mark of respect for his father's command, and said, "Let Indrayudha be brought to me I am eager to mount him " Very soon that wonderful steed was led into his presence Two men grasped the bit on each side in an effort to curb Indrayudha's energy The horse was so large that his back was just within reach of a man's uplifted hands He snorted in wrath at any hindrance to his course He seemed to be examining the three worlds as if making ready to leap over them His body was streaked with yellow, green and pink so that he resembled a rainbow Flakes of foam spouted from his frothing lips

Chandrapida looked at the horse in amazement "What a jewel!", he exclaimed "What has Indra, the lord of all the gods, gained by his mastery of the three worlds if he has not mounted this horse? My father's royal glory must surely surpass all the riches of heaven if he has such treasures

as this Noble Indrayudha, I hail you Forgive my audacity in mounting you "

As if understanding every syllable, the horse looked at him steadily His eyes blinked as he tossed his mane and repeatedly struck the ground with his right hoof The hair on his chest was tinged with gray as it was covered by the dust raised by his hoofs He uttered a pleasant whinnying sound as if summoning the prince to ride him Chandrapida seated himself firmly on his back and emerged from the gate of the house of learning He saw a mighty cavalcade assembled to welcome him The clatter of hoofs seemed to fill the hollows of earth and heaven At Chandrapida's approach all the riders were in motion, like waves at the rising of the moon Balahaka presented the princes and the nobles of the realm one by one They bent their heads respectfully and Chandrapida acknowledged their homage A large umbrella with a golden stick was borne above him during the ceremony it was like the lotus on which his glory might dwell A thousand voices cheered him and wished him long life and victory

Accompanied by Vaishampayana, the prince rode through the streets of Ujjayini Windows on the balconies were hastily opened Women left their work half-done Some of them, their hands freshly painted with henna, were like lotus-buds in early sunlight Others, whose tender feet were enmeshed in the bells of their girdles, moved slowly, like elephants restrained by their chains When these beauties appeared at the emerald-studded lattices and gazed upon the prince, it seemed as though an entire grove had blossomed out at once The city seemed girt by the stream of their charms The sky seemed studded by innumerable moons Chandrapida's lovely form entered into their hearts as if they were mirrors Their graceful speech was marked by witty remarks, tender confidences, mutual coquettishness, confusion, coyness, and longing Some of them were absent-minded, others lost in curiosity, still others inquisitive Some tried naughtily to attract the prince's attention, others were angry because the prince

directed his glance at someone else

Meanwhile Chandrapida continued his progress. The crest of jasmine flowers under his umbrella looked like a mass of moonbeams falling upon his dark hair which they had mistaken for the night. When he laughed as he exchanged remarks with Vaishampayana, the space between them was illumined by the brightness of his teeth. At last he reached the palace, passed through the crowd of attendant kings, and saw his father seated on a couch.

While the prince was still at some distance, the king rose from his couch and stretched his arms eagerly. His eyes were filled with tears of joy. At last he embraced his son as if he wanted to absorb him in his own body. Then he also embraced Vaishampayana and asked the two of them to go to the inner apartments. Chandrapida entered his mother's chamber and satisfied the claims of her affection. She embraced him repeatedly, and kissed his brow. After gazing upon him fondly for a while, queen Vilasavati said to her son, "My child, your father was indeed hard-hearted. He made you undergo such a severe training for so many years. How did you endure the tedious discipline imposed by your *gurus*? How have you acquired, with such tenderness of youth, the fortitude of a strong man?"

After spending some time with his mother Chandrapida mounted Indrayudha again and, accompanied by Vaishampayana, visited Shukanasa. He saluted the great counsellor as though he were a second father. Rejecting the jewelled seat brought for him, he sat respectfully on the bare ground. Shukanasa advanced towards him and, after looking into his eyes for a few moments, said, "My child, King Tarapida has now truly gained his heart's desire. He has seen you grown to youth and possessed of all knowledge. The gods of your race are now content. Blessed are the subjects who will have you as their protector. Go, now, and help your father to carry the burden of the earth." The prince listened to these words respectfully and then, entering the inner chamber, paid his homage to Vaishampayana's mother, Manorama.

Returning to his palace he found that a sacrifice to Agni

was being performed. The gateways of the palace were decorated with white jars on either side. Green sandal branches hung above the pediments. Thousands of white flags fluttered in the air. Every one was dressed in bright clothes. In this way the round of festivities and ceremonies went on until the day came to a close.

Next morning Chandrapida mounted Indrayudha and went out on a hunt, accompanied by a retinue of runners, heaters, horses and elephants. Expert hunters held trained bounds in golden leashes. Chandrapida killed many lions, boars and other animals, while others he captured alive with great skill and courage. Woodland goddesses looked at him with half-closed eyes, frightened by the twanging of his bow. When the hunt was over he returned to his chamber and bathed with scented water stored in a hundred pitchers of gold and silver. He was anointed with sandal paste and perfumed with rare lotions. Then, putting on white raiment, he went to the banquet hall. A low table was covered with a hundred jewelled utensils and dishes. It looked like the autumn sky gleaming with the brightness of its stars. Chandrapida enjoyed his meal at leisure, conversing pleasantly with Vaishampayana.

Next day a messenger came from his mother, Queen Vilasavati, and said, "Prince, I bring to you Patralekha, daughter of the king of Kuluta. Your mother has brought her up as her own daughter. She came as a captive when the royal city of Kuluta was captured by your father. The queen bids you take the greatest care of her. She will stay with you as your betel-bearer. You must shield her from the thoughtless and strive to make her happy. Such is your mother's wish." Chandrapida accepted Patralekha in his train. From that moment she was filled with devotion for him and followed him like his shadow. The prince developed great affection for her and trusted her with all his secrets.

V

After a few days the king decided that Chandrapida should

be anointed as the Crown Prince. When the preparations for the ceremony were completed Shukanasa called the prince aside and gave him appropriate advice. "Dear Chandrapida", he said, "You have learnt all the sciences, and read all the *Shastras*. But there is much that you have still to learn. The darkness arising from youth is very thick and cannot be pierced by the sun, nor by the radiance of all the jewels in the treasury. The intoxication of Lakshmi is terrible and does not leave us even in old age. The blindness of power admits of no cure. The fever of pride does not yield to any cooling appliances. The poison of the senses is maddening, no charms or medicinal herbs can counteract it. Passion leaves a stain that cannot be washed by bathing or purification.

In early youth the mind often loses its purity even though it is cleansed by knowledge of the scriptures. Nature carries a young heart before it like a dry leaf borne by the wind. The senses are captivated by pleasure, as deer are charmed by a mirage.

Beware of Lakshmi, my son. She is fickle and her ways are but little understood. When acquired she is hard to keep. Even though held fast by the cords of heroism, she escapes. Though guarded by elephants she flees away. She does not regard race, she does not follow the fortune of a family, does not consider character, does not count intelligence, does not court righteousness, does not honour generosity. She has no use for sacred learning, she does not understand truth, she does not value discrimination. Like the hazy outline of an aerial city, she vanishes as soon as we look upon her. She dwells on the edge of a sword, as if perpetually engaged in learning cruelty. Like a creeper, she is a parasite, like a river, she is full of bubbles, like the sun's rays on a cloudy day, she rests now on one thing and now on another. She regards the virtuous as impure, she despises the lofty as unpropitious, she looks upon the gentle as worthless. She avoids a hero like a thorn, leaps over a courteous man as if he were a snake, shuns the giver of charities as a nightmare. She keeps away from the temperate

and mocks at the wise Her ways are full of jugglery and contradiction Though creating a fever she also produces a chill, though rising from water she increases thirst, though of earthly mould she is invisible, though attached to the highest, she really loves only the base For the poisonous weeds of desire she is like a fostering shower, for the deer of the senses, she is like the hunter's alluring song, for the picture of virtue she is like a polluting cloud of smoke Lakshmi is the cataract filming over the light of wisdom, the lair of the serpent of sin, the watch-tower for the monster of pride, the prologue of the drama of deception Under her influence the heart of a king becomes the abode of shameful thoughts

And remember, my dear Chandrapida, that success is a very uncertain commodity Sometimes kings are puffed up by their achievements, and their natures are poisoned as if by an accumulation of diseases Moreover, kings are liable to be tortured by the senses which, though only five in number, turn into a thousand Pierced by the arrows of Cupid, kings, already sunk in luxury, are struck down and writhe in their agony To make things worse, they are deceived and misled by rogues who hang around them These evil companions describe gambling as a relaxation, adultery as a sign of cleverness, drinking as a necessary pleasure, neglect of the family as freedom from bonds To them contempt for a *guru's* words is a sign of originality, disregard of the gods is freedom, flattery is forethought, recklessness is enterprise and lack of discrimination is impartiality Guided by such boon companions, and cheated by their sweet words, kings become conceited and blind Though subject to all the limitations of ordinary mortals, they regard themselves as divine beings They esteem their glance as a favour and their words as a glorious blessing to others Burdened by the pride of their imaginary greatness, they neglect the gods, slight their teachers, and make fun of the learned as fools wasting their opportunities of pleasure in useless labour They accept a counsellor's skill only in deception and appoint as their family priests only those charlatans who

indulge in magical rites and the like

My son, you must beware of the fate that overtakes such kings. You must strive never to earn the scorn of your people or the reproaches of your friends. Do not let wolfish courtiers prey upon you, nor rogues mislead you, nor women delude you. I know that you are steadfast and have been trained for a life of virtue. Yet it was my duty to have warned you. Now go and enjoy your consecration to kingship. Bear the yoke which will be handed over to you, as your forefathers have borne it. Bend the heads of your enemies and raise the heads of your friends. Crown yourself with glory."

Having tendered this advice Shukanasa was silent. Chandrapida felt that these words had made him pure and radiant. He carefully pondered over them as he returned to his palace. Some days later King Tarapida chose an auspicious moment for anointing his son. A thousand chieftains gathered in a vast pavilion. The vessel of consecration was raised aloft. Holy water was brought from distant pools, rivers and seas. Tears of joy mingled with this water. Royal glory passed on to Chandrapida without leaving Tarapida, just as a creeper, still clasping its own tree, passes on to another tree. The prince was garlanded with fresh white flowers and adorned with a necklace of pearls. An amulet was placed on his right arm and he was clad in new robes of silk. After he had received the respectful homage of all the assembled kings, a mighty drum was sounded and the prince set out on his victorious course. The sound of that drum, struck by golden drumsticks, was like the sound of doomsday. It seemed as though the foundations of the earth were being shaken by an earthquake. The echo of that drum of victory spread through the three worlds and reached the peaks of the Himalayas. Chandrapida came down from the throne, and with him descended the glory of his rivals on earth. He left the hall of assembly and made ready to start on his wanderings.

The chieftains rose hastily and, as they collided with each other in confusion, the ground was strewn with their

pearls as if grains of rice were being scattered as a good omen for the prince's journey. An elephant was brought, adorned with all the auspicious signs, and Patralekha was placed inside the howdah. The prince mounted. An umbrella was raised over him, white like the whirlpool of the milky ocean. As he started, he saw the horizon bathed in rich sunlight. It seemed as though the brilliance of his own majesty was lighting up the four quarters. Vaishampayana kept close to the prince and it seemed as if the moon and the sun had come together. When the two friends, accompanied by their numerous followers, advanced, it appeared that the earth was made of horses, the horizon of elephants, the atmosphere of parasols. The sky seemed to dissolve in dust. Gazing at this spectacle Vaishampayana said, "Prince, is anything left unconquered by your mighty father? Is there a region of earth still unsubdued, a fortress not yet captured, treasures not yet acquired? Are there any continents not yet colonised, any kings not yet humbled? When I look at this army I recall accounts of the *Mahabharata*. It is a marvel that the earth has not split into a thousand pieces by the weight of this army, and that its muscles, the mountains, have not burst asunder."

The prince, however, was dejected at the thought of his separation from his parents. Throughout the day he continued to travel and, when night came, he still thought of his parents and of Shukanasa. Vaishampayana rested on a couch near his own, and Patralekha slept on a blanket placed on the ground. The prince conversed with them, recalling memories of the time he had spent in his father's house. At dawn he got up and continued his advance. His army seemed to swell at every stage of the journey. It seemed to hollow out the earth, shake the mountains, dry the rivers, batter down the fortresses and empty the lakes. Chandrapida humbled the haughty, exalted the meek, destroyed the wicked and protected the needy. He anointed tributary princes, gathered treasures, accepted gifts and inscribed edicts. Thus treading the earth from shore to

shore, and turning the ocean's expanse gray with the dust his army, he wandered for a long time Within three years he had subdued the limits of earthly space

VI

In the course of his wanderings Chandrapīda occupied Suvarṇapura and, as his men were weary, encamped there One day, during his sojourn in this prosperous city, the prince had a desire to go on a hunt He mounted Indrayudha and roamed through the woods In an obscure part of the forest he had a glimpse of a pair of *Kinnaras* The sight was strange to him Eager to capture them, he gave rein to his horse and pursued the unearthly beings But the *Kinnaras* hurried away and started climbing a steep hill Again and again Chandrapīda approached them, but every time they eluded him At last he was checked by the steep ascent and stopped

He discovered that he had strayed far from his companions and did not know how to get back to Suvarṇapura The prince laughed at his own folly and reflected 'Why have I behaved like a child? Why have I wearied myself for nothing? What would I have gained if I had got the *Kinnaras*? Indeed, I have acted thoughtlessly The good work that I was doing has been interrupted I have forsaken my friends and earned for myself the ridicule of every one And now who can show me the way to the city! I am in a mighty forest at the foot of a high mountain It is well known that Suvarṇapura is the northernmost city on earth So it is clear that this mountain must be Kailasa I must now go south and try to rejoin my companions'

Thinking in this fashion, Chandrapīda left Indrayudha in a grassland, and himself roamed about in search of water After some time he came upon the wet foot-prints of wild elephants and inferred that water was near at hand He followed the track which led him on the slopes of Kailasa Climbing higher and higher he saw a clump of lofty trees,

rising like a mighty cloud heavy with the weight of rain. The breeze, soft and dewy, seemed to woo him. It was cool, aromatic with the scent of flowers, and musical with the wafted melody of swans. He entered the grove and discovered a lake. It was the incomparable Lake Achchoda.

Never had he seen a lake so beautiful. It was like the mirror of Lakshmi, like the crystal chamber of the goddess of earth. It was like the Himalayas liquefied, like molten moonlight, like Siva's benign smile transformed into water. It seemed as if the merit of the three worlds had congealed in the shape of that lake, as if the mass of autumn clouds had been poured into some huge vessel. It was a lake that seemed to have been fashioned from the pure hearts of ascetics, from the virtues of good men, from the eyes of gazelles and the rays of pearls. Its expanse was vast, indeed it seemed to be endless, like a philosopher's futile argument.

At the sight of that lake Chandrapida's weariness left him. He reflected: 'Although my pursuit of the *Kinnaras* was fruitless, my eyes have been rewarded. I have seen the perfection of all that causes joy, the vanishing point of all that is worthy of sight. Now I understand why Siva never leaves the Kailasa mountain, surely it is because he cannot bear to be away from this lake.' As the prince was absorbed in these thoughts Indrayudha, having eaten his fill of the delicious grass, rolled on the ground, and drank the cool water of the lake. When the horse was thoroughly refreshed, Chandrapida tied him with a golden chain to a tree nearby and himself came to the shore of the lake. He washed his hands and supped on pieces of lotus-fibre. Then, gathering some lotus leaves, he made a couch for himself on a rock shaded by creepers, folded his cloak to serve as a pillow, and lay down to sleep.

After he had rested for a little while, the prince was awakened by the distant sound of music. Indrayudha, too, pricked up his ears and arched his neck in the direction from which the sound came. The prince left his bed of lotus-leaves and looked this way and that, amazed that a

human voice, mingled with the notes of a lute, should be heard in such a deserted place. The melody was so enchanting that he was impelled to advance towards the spot from where it seemed to originate. Followed by Indrayudha, and accompanied by fawns spellbound like himself, he reached a secluded grove in which there was a temple of Siva. As he passed through the door the pollen of blossoms from the overhanging creepers fell upon his head, and he was thus forced to appear before the God as if smeared with ash. Inside the shrine he beheld the emblem of Siva, adorned with freshly-plucked lotus-buds. And right in front of the deity he saw a maiden singing a hymn.

The splendour of her beauty seemed to turn the entire temple into ivory. Her face shone as though it were a storehouse of penance gathered for many years. Her complexion was so fair that she seemed to be encased in crystal, or soaked in a sea of milk. She was like the brightness of Siva's smile, like the moonlight which zealously tries to overcome the darkness of Siva's neck. In her purity she was like the three Vedas, or like the germ of a golden age. She seemed to have been fashioned from the whiteness of swans, or to have emerged from the moon's orb, or to have been manufactured out of ivory flakes. Her locks fell luxuriantly upon her shoulders. Her brow was smeared with ash, pure as the dust of stars ground by the hoofs of the sun's heavenly steeds. She seemed to be a maiden of eighteen years, but her age could not be counted by earthly reckoning since she was like a goddess.

As Chandrapida bowed before the blessed Siva he reflected. 'Each wonder seems to be followed by a greater one. When I was chasing the *Kinnaras*, I reached a spot of incredible beauty. In my search for water I stumbled upon a wondrous lake. And now, seeking the source of a melody, I see this divine maiden.' Meanwhile the maiden had finished her song. Her lute was silent. It appeared as if a lotus pool had suddenly become still through the departure of humming bees. The maiden got up, made obeisance to Siva, and then looked at Chandrapida. Her glance was

so pure that the prince felt as though she were sprinkling holiness upon him by her eyes. In a gentle voice she hailed him as a guest and invited him to visit her home so that the duties of hospitality might be performed.

At a distance of hundred paces from the temple he saw the cave in which she lived. It was moist with the spray of mountain torrents and veiled by the dense foliage of *amala* trees. Inside the cave a number of pitchers stood in a corner. There was a bed of bark with a gourd by its side. In another corner a pair of sandals made of coconut matting were suspended on a peg. Pressed by her, Chandrapida accepted her hospitality and drank the cool water offered to him in a leafy cup. She requested him to relate his adventures, and Chandrapida described how he had strayed to the foot of Kailasa while pursuing a pair of *Kinnaras*. After a while the maiden rose and walked about under the trees with a bowl in her hand. To Chandrapida's amazement the trees cast down their fruits of their own accord. When enough was gathered she returned to the cave with him and the two enjoyed their repast.

Emboldened by her kindness Chandrapida said, 'Noble lady, I am bewildered. My curiosity has got the better of my diffidence and I must request you to tell me about yourself. Which is the race honoured by your birth? Why have you, tender as a blossom, imposed upon yourself the life of an ascetic? Why are you dwelling alone in this deserted forest? And how is it that your body, though formed out of the five elements, has attained such heavenly brilliance?' The maiden listened to his enquiry in silence and then, as she tried to answer him, her eyes welled up and a stream of tears flooded her cheeks. Those pearly tears were saturated with the purity of her mind. They were like the distilled essence of renunciation dropping from her bright eyes. She wept noiselessly for some time and then, bathing her eyes with water and drying her face with the end of her robe, she narrated the story of her life.

And this is what Chandrapida heard from her.

VII

Oh Prince, why do you want to hear the unhappy story of my ascetic life? My heart has been a tyrant to me and my destiny has been a hard one. However, since you are so eager to hear it, I must narrate my tale of sorrow. Perhaps you know that in the abode of gods there are maidens known as *Apsarases*. There are many families of these maidens. Some are sprung from the mind of Brahma, others from the Vedas, and still others from moonbeams. In one such family of *Apsarases* once a maiden was born named Gauri. She was so fair that she seemed to have been made out of the digits of the moon poured into a single stream. When she grew up she was courted by Hamsa, the king of the *Gandharvas*. They were united as the lotus pool is united with the autumn. She became the Queen of the *Gandharvas* and enjoyed every happiness in company with her husband. To this pair I was born an only daughter. My father celebrated my birth with great festivities and gave me the name of Mahashweta. In his palace I spent my childhood. *Gandharva* maidens fondly passed me from lap to lap and I grew in the cool shade of their affection. In the course of time youth came to me as bees come to the flowers and honey to the bees.

One day I went with my mother to bathe in the lake which you have already seen. It was the season of spring and all the lotuses were in bloom. I worshipped the images of Siva carved on the rocks by Parvati herself countless ages ago. The bowers were covered by creepers whose blossoms were weighed down by bees. The mangoes were flowering, honey oozed out of the holes in their buds pierced by the cuckoos. The serpents, frightened by the murmur of white peacocks, had deserted the sandal avenues. Lost in the charms of this wooded spot I wandered for a long time. Suddenly the fragrance of a flower, borne on the wind reached me. It was a scent that drowned the fragrance of all other flowers, although the entire forest was in blossom. It anointed all my senses and overwhelmed my perception.

Swarms of bees followed it, seeking to make it their very own. It was a perfume fit for the gods.

Looking for the source of this heavenly fragrance, I came upon a youthful ascetic on his way to the lake. Such was his splendour that he seemed to be enclosed in a cage of quivering lightning. His eyebrows were like arches rising high above the abode of human perfection. His nose was sharp and aquiline, his eyes were gentle like a deer's, his lips rosy with the glow of youth. The thread on his shoulder was like the bent string of Cupid's bow. He carried a dainty pitcher in one hand and a rosary in the other. He was clad in the bark of a heavenly coral tree, bright like the eyelids of a dove. And he was accompanied by another youthful ascetic, his equal in age, a companion in every way worthy of himself.

Looking up at the ascetic's face I saw a bunch of flowers placed on one of his ears. Now I understood where the overpowering perfume had come from. But I forgot the fragrance as soon as I looked upon the beauty of the ascetic's face. I had thus far imagined that the Creator had compounded all the beauty of his Universe in Cupid. Now I found another surpassing Cupid himself. When Brahma made the moon to gladden the earth, when he made the heavenly lotus as Lakshmi's palace of joy, he was only practising to acquire the necessary skill for the creation of this ascetic's face.

Suddenly Love, the comrade of beauty, enthralled me—Love who does not care for good or ill and who is always ready to assail young hearts. I was captivated as the intoxicating spring captivates bees. With my eyelashes half closed I looked upon him and drank him in. I wanted to offer him my heart and to enter into him with my entire soul. I knew it was a feeling unworthy of a noble maiden, but I could not master myself. A storm of sighs swept from me. How cruel was Cupid, to have kindled in me ideas of love towards a cold ascetic! I thought that he must be scorning me in his heart. With a supreme effort I restrained myself and was about to leave the place when

I remembered that a holy man has to be revered, whatever the circumstances. So I bent down before him, my garland swaying on my wavy hair and my earrings brushing my shoulders. To my surprise I found that he was also thrilled by my sight. He wavered like a flower in the wind. The rosary in his hand trembled, as if afraid that he might break his sacred vows. His pupils were dilated and his glances turned the atmosphere into a lotus grove. When I saw his condition my love was redoubled. I advanced and asked his friend, "Sir, what is the name of His Reverence? And from what tree were these flowers collected? Their scent is unique and has kindled my curiosity."

The companion replied, "Surely you have heard of Shwetaketu, the great sage. Once, gathering lotuses for the worship of gods, he went down to the heavenly Ganga. Lakshmi, enthroned on a white lotus close by, saw him and was struck by the arrows of love. Shwetaketu, in his turn, was won over by the very first glance of Lakshmi. A son was born and was given the name of Pundarika. My friend, whom you see adorned with these fragrant flowers, is none other than Pundarika. As for the flowers that have excited your curiosity, they come from the Parijata tree which emerged when the ocean of milk was churned by gods and titans. It was given to my friend as a gift by a nymph."

While his friend was speaking, Pundarika himself approached me and said, "Why do you bother to ask all this? If the flowers please you, they are yours. Take them." And gently taking the flowers from his ears he placed them on mine. As his fingers brushed against my cheeks he dropped his rosary. But before it reached the ground I seized it and placed it on my neck. Within a few moments our hearts had understood each other.

I was startled by the voice of my umbrella-bearer who reminded me that my mother had finished her bath and it was time to go home. Like a newly captured elephant, rebellious at the first touch of the hook, my mind was being reluctantly dragged away. Meanwhile Pundarika's

friend was upbraiding him for his lack of self-control "Where is your firmness?", he said, "And what has happened to your holy vows? If even men like you are swept off their feet like this, all knowledge will become worthless and the teachings of the *gurus* will lose their meaning. Even your rosary is being carried off by this worthless girl."

Pundarika said sheepishly, "Do not misunderstand me, dear Kapinjala. I shall certainly not allow this maiden to take my rosary with her." And then, feigning wrath, he turned to me and said, "What kind of sport is this, maiden? I shall not let you go until you return my rosary." At this I loosened a string of pearls from my neck, placed it in his outstretched hand, and took leave of him. I do not know how I managed to join my companions and reach home. I was like a river driven backwards.

Entering my chamber, I dismissed all my attendants and stood alone with my face pressed against the jewelled window. Ignorant of the course of love, I did not know which way to turn and what remedy to seek. I gazed into empty space, thinking of Pundarika. I longed to ask the breeze where my beloved was going. I foolishly tried to get news of him from the scent of flowers and the songs of birds. Though he was far away I turned towards him as the lotus turns to the sun, the waves of the ocean to the moon, or the peacock to the cloud. I fondly placed his rosary on my neck and recalled the delicate touch of his fingers.

After some time my companion, Taralika, came to me and said, "Princess, one of those ascetics followed me and asked about you. When I told him your name and ancestry, he said 'Dear lady, young as you are I nevertheless see in you great steadfastness. Please help me. Carry a letter from me to Princess Mahashweta.' When I promised to do his bidding, he plucked a young shoot from a tree nearby, crushed it on a stone, and tearing a piece from his bark-garment wrote these words with his nail."

I snatched the letter from Taralika's hand. This is how it read: 'As a swan in a Himalayan lake is lured by the treacherous arms of a creeper on the bank, so is my heart

beguiled by your pearl necklace' When I read this message my lovesick mind, already distraught, lost its bearings altogether The letter did to me what a dark night does to a short-sighted man, a conjurer's trick to a simpleton, atheistic philosophy to one already wavering I spoke to my maid with great reverence I cajoled and flattered her into talking about him I asked a thousand questions about Pundarika's companion and, bolting the doors of my room, heard Taralika's answers again and again

The sun, like a ball suspended in the sky, became crimson The lotuses closed their eyes, as though swooning at the sun's departure Before the night was far advanced, an attendant approached me and said, "Princess, one of the two hermits whom you met has come here He says you have in your possession a string of beads, and he begs of you to return it " The very mention of a hermit made my heart pound and my breath came heavily as I asked the attendant to admit the visitor A few moments later I saw Kapinjala, who is to Pundarika what youth is to beauty, love to youth, spring to love, and the breeze to spring I brought a seat for him and, when he was reluctantly compelled to accept it, I washed his feet He looked at Taralika and his glance suggested that he wanted to speak to me privately I told him that I had no secrets from my friend and that he could speak freely

Kapinjala exclaimed, "Alas, what can I say? Through shame I can hardly utter the words that I have framed in my mind My dearest friend, once a passionless ascetic firm as a rock, has become a pitiable object of Cupid's sport You will recall, noble princess, that I rebuked Pundarika for his behaviour, so unworthy of a holy man I left him in considerable anger When I calmed down, I returned to the spot where I had last seen him He was not there I knew that love had deprived him of his judgment, and I felt anxious about his welfare I wandered for hours, searching every bower, glade and avenue At last I discovered him in a thicket of creepers on the bank of a lake He was like one in a trance, or like one suddenly

struck down by paralysis. Tears silently trickled down his eyes. His suffering was unbearable. Even the creepers that shaded him trembled and sighed as they watched him. Trees dropped upon his head the pollen of their fresh blossoms as a powder to subdue the fever of love. Pundarika was draped in paleness, like the new moon, he had dwindled, like a river in May, he was fading away, like a sandal tree whose roots suddenly become diseased.

With great effort he opened his eyes and looked at me languidly. His deep sighs were punctuated by indistinct words that I could not make out. When he seemed a little more steady I again exhorted him to control himself. I told him that an ascetic who listens to love, waters a poison tree and mistakes a burning piece of coal for a jewel. He leaned on me and said 'Kapinjala, you are lucky. Cupid has spared you the torments that I endure. To me all talk of stability, reflection or judgment has become meaningless. The hour for good advice has gone by. You see my wretched plight. My heart is seething, my eyes dissolve and my entire being is on fire. Do what my condition demands. Please understand that it is no use speaking of good and evil.' It was clear to me that Pundarika had gone too far to be turned back. So I made an effort to preserve his life.

I collected some tender lotus-fibres from the lake and prepared a couch for him. As he rested there I anointed him from head to foot with the juice of soft sandal twigs. I soothed his brow with camphor-dust and fanned him with a plantain leaf. It was painful for me to reflect that so promising an ascetic had become a victim of that miscreant, Love. But I consoled myself with the thought that Love is a tyrant who may strike any one, high or low. Nor are his depredations confined to the human race. The lotus falls in love with the sun, lightning clings to the cloud. Then why blame Pundarika who had, after all, a human heart?

Noble lady, I have described Pundarika's condition. As a friend my one duty now is to save his life. The fever

of love admits no delay It is now for you to judge what is to be done "

When Kapinjala stopped speaking, I hardly knew what to say to him The certainty that my love was reciprocated made me supremely happy I never doubted, even for a moment, that Kapinjala had narrated only the truth It was inconceivable that there should be any trace of exaggeration in the words of so balanced and restrained a person I had hardly recovered from my confusion when a messenger entered announcing that my mother, the queen, was visiting me Kapinjala hastily took his leave, with a last appealing glance at me My mother came and stayed with me for a long time, but my mind was far away and I did not hear a word of what she said. At last she left me and returned to her chamber

It was the hour of sunset The west was crimson, the lotus pools were turning green, the east was a mass of deep blue and the entire world was gradually overcome by blackness I took counsel with Taralika about the predicament in which I found myself By transgressing the code of conduct dictated by my birth and position, I would bring disgrace to my parents On the other hand, by courting death I might break the heart of Pundarika, and that might drive Kapinjala to despair As the night advanced, my suffering became unendurable Already consumed by fever, I seemed to be subjected to a shower of white-hot coals Taralika asked me not to think of the rules of conduct, or the prestige of my parents, at such a moment She said, "Your love is like an ocean whose manifold waves are swelling at moonrise Let me fetch Pundarika here There is no other way "

But I decided to go to him myself From Kapinjala's account it was obvious that Pundarika was in no condition to move about By and by the firmament was flooded with moonlight The sky became a sandy island in the river of night Accompanied by Taralika I set out Pundarika's rosary was on my neck and the bunch of Parijata flowers given by him adorned one of my ears Dressed in red silk

that seemed to have been woven from the rays of rubies, I slipped out of the palace. The strong scent of Parijata flowers attracted a swarm of bees which seemed to form a blue veil around me. The moon, stretching out its rays, seemed to urge me on with its long fingers.

As I approached, my right eye quivered. My heart seemed to sink with anxiety at this ill-omen. My fears were soon realised. I heard Kapinjala bewailing and sobbing. "Alas, everything is lost!", he cried, "I am undone. Cupid, cruel demon that you are, what evil deed have you compassed! Oh wicked, wanton Mahashweta, in what way had my poor friend harmed you? Why have you led him to destruction? Venerable Shwetaketu, do you know that your very life is stolen from you? Dharma, you are now helpless—your protector is gone. Knowledge, you are widowed. Alas, where shall I seek refuge? My friend, what has happened to your love for me? Why have you deserted me?"

As I heard Kapinjala utter these pathetic words, my own life seemed to be ebbing away. I advanced on the rough ground as quickly as my condition permitted. I stumbled at every step and my cloak was torn as I passed through tangled creepers. At last I saw Pundarika on a couch of lotus leaves. He lay absolutely still, as though listening to the sound of my steps. The garland of lotus fibres on his neck bound him, as if with a chain of moonbeams, to drag him forcibly to another world. Before my very eyes he yielded up his life.

I do not know how long and in what way I lamented the cruel departure of Pundarika. But I do recall that I suddenly asked Taralika to gather dry wood and make a pile for me. As I was preparing to join the lord of my life in the other world, a strange being left the moon's pale orb and descended upon the earth. He was wearing a silken vesture, white as foam, which waved in the breeze. His face was bright with the rays that shot from the gems in his ears. His necklace, made of large pearls, looked like a cluster of stars. Lofty in stature, with all the marks of greatness, he seemed to purify the space through which he moved.

This heavenly being gently picked up Pundarika and said to me, in a voice as deep as it was sonorous, "Mahashweta, you must not think of taking your own life. You will be united with him again." And with these words he soared into the sky, carrying Pundarika with him. Before I realised what had happened Kapinjala followed the heavenly being and pursued him in the sky, crying "Where are you taking my friend, you monster!"

Kapinjala's disappearance was for me a second bereavement. My grief was redoubled and I was overcome by a feeling of utter helplessness. Taralika shook me out of my stupor. "What a miracle!", she said, "Such godlike beings never make deceptive statements. Princess, you must take courage. I am sure Kapinjala will return and tell us what has befallen Pundarika. You must preserve your life and bear your grief. Your reunion with him is certain."

These words raised in me the illusion that my life was worth prolonging. I spent that night on the bank of the lake. To me, in my fathomless misery, it was like a night of doom extending over a thousand years. I tossed on the ground, my face smothered by my dishevelled locks. At dawn I got up, bathed in the lake, and resolved not to inflict death upon myself. I picked up all the things that Pundarika had used—his pitcher, his garments and his rosary. And then, taking the vow of asceticism, I came to the temple of Siva. Next day my parents came and tried to persuade me to return home. They prayed and admonished, with many tender words and streams of tears. But I stuck to my determination. Since then I have been living here. I sustain my body on water and on the fruits and tubers that grow wild in this region. Such is my life—cold, fruitless and without joy.

VIII

Mahashweta had now come to the end of her story. She covered her face with the edge of her bark garment, and it appeared as though the moon was obscured by an autumn

cloud Unable to suppress her pent-up emotions she gave way to renewed weeping A torrent of tears gushed from her eyes and her breath was choked with sobs

Chandrapīda was filled with admiration as much for her modesty and austerity as for her divine beauty He looked upon her serene and pure countenance and said in a gentle voice, "Only those should weep who are afraid of pain, or are devoid of gratitude Such people can do very little that is worthy of love and can only show their feelings through idle tears But you have left nothing undone that love may demand You have despised earthly pleasures You have relinquished the joys of power and wealth Your delicate body has been subjected to stern penance Above all, you have made a supreme effort to prolong your life It is easy to abdicate from life under the weight of unbearable sorrow But it needs heroism to carry the burden of grief Therefore, noble Mahashweta, please restrain your tears Your companion, Tarālika, was right when she said that the words of heavenly beings are not uttered lightly You have been promised reunion with Pundarika and I am sure the promise will be kept "

As Chandrapīda was consoling her in this way the sun was about to sink, as if overwhelmed with grief at Mahashweta's story Gradually the horizon was suffused with the glow of sunset, soft like a piece of silk dyed in the juice of lotuses The breeze, cooled by the dew, wandered at leisure on its aerial track marked by the fragrance of wild flowers The earth was soon enveloped in darkness Birds fell asleep one by one Mahashweta repeated her evening prayers, washed her feet, and lay down on her humble couch of bark Chandrapīda, too, made for himself a bed of branches on the other rock in the cave and retired He pondered for some time over the strange story that he had heard Then he asked, "Where is your friend, Tarālika? Did she not come with you when you left your home?" Mahashweta replied, "Sir, Tarālika has gone to the kingdom of the *Gandharvas*, carrying a message for my dearest friend, Kadambari."

Chandrapida was curious to know about Kadambari, a name that had not been mentioned by Mahashweta in the course of her long narrative. So he said, "Now that we have conversed so freely with each other, and you have shared your sorrow with me, I shall be grateful if you tell me about Kadambari also."

Mahashweta said, "Kadambari is the daughter of Chitraratha, King of the *Gandharvas*, and his queen, Madira. Even in her childhood she was regarded as exceptionally pretty, now, in the bloom of youth, she is a paragon of loveliness, unmatched in heaven or earth. Moreover, she is as generous and affectionate as she is beautiful. We have been friends since we were little children. We have played together in the dust, and together we have learnt to dance and sing. When she heard of my love for Pundarika, so cruelly thwarted by death, she made a resolve not to accept a husband while I was enduring my grief in loneliness. She declared that if her parents tried to marry her off against her will she would end her life by fasting or poison. King Chitraratha and Queen Madira are sunk in deep dejection. Only this morning I received a despatch from them, imploring me to dissuade Kadambari from her stern purpose. That is why I have sent Taralika with the message that if Kadambari is anxious to see me alive she must not bring sorrow to her parents and must do what they desire."

Early next morning, when Mahashweta and Chandrapida had just finished their prayers, Taralika returned to the cave. She was accompanied by a *Gandharva* boy named Keyuraka. Both of them were surprised to see a stranger in their midst. Chandrapida's wonderful personality made a deep impression upon them and they respectfully bowed to him before taking their seats.

Mahashweta made eager enquiries about her friend. Taralika said, "Princess Kadambari is well. But her reply to your message is such that I do not have the heart to repeat it. This *Gandharva* boy will convey it to you". Mahashweta anxiously looked at Keyuraka, who delivered this message from Kadambari. "Why has Taralika been

sent? To test my feelings? Or is this a subtle method of blaming me for staying on at home while Mahashweta is spending her days in that desolate place? Or has Mahashweta wearied of my friendship? Or is she angry with me for some mysterious reason? I cannot understand how she can expect me to heed her advice. I shall never hearken to the call of Love, that pitiless tyrant, while my dearest friend sorrows for Pundarika night and day, avoiding the very sight of humankind. No one can shake me from this resolve.

Mahashweta was disappointed. She pondered over the situation for a long time and then dismissed Keyuraka who returned to Hemakuta, the capital of the *Gandharvas*. Then, turning to Chandrapida, Mahashweta said, "Prince, why don't you come with me to the kingdom of the *Gandharvas*? You will see many wonders and gather novel experiences in that strange and beautiful land. I shall introduce you to that treasure of loveliness, Kadambari, who is like my second self. Perhaps you may be able to remove this whim from her mind. You have been kind to me. Your sympathy has lightened my grief. Now please crown our friendship by acceding to my request."

Chandrapida readily agreed to this suggestion and together they travelled to the land of *Gandharvas*. Reaching Hemakuta, the capital city, they passed through golden arches and, crossing a number of courts and pavilions, approached the women's apartments in the palace. At the sight of Mahashweta every one rejoiced and messengers ran this way and that to spread the news of her arrival. Chandrapida marvelled at all the curiosities that he saw there. It seemed to be a world of women, a continent immersed in the waves of feminine charms, a race created by Prajapati out of dislike for men. Here all was Beauty and Love. Cupid was the supreme deity.

Tanks were being scented with perfumed powders, jewelled lamps were being arranged in dark avenues, ripe pomegranates were being covered with pearly nets to keep off the birds, emerald-green arbours were being swept with golden brooms, the swans were being fed on

lotus honey, the tame peacocks were being taken to their luxurious shower-baths. The pigeons were enjoying their meal of mango-buds. Maidens were weaving garlands. Singing lessons were going on in apartments specially furnished and equipped with the finest instruments. The caged parrots and *mainas* were receiving their lessons.

At last Chandrapida saw Princess Kadambari herself in the middle of a spacious pavilion. She rested on her bent arms, leaning on a white pillow. Her couch was covered with blue silk. Attendants were fanning her with peacock-tails. By her side sat Keyuraka, whom Chandrapida had already met. He was describing Chandrapida's beauty and grace, while the princess listened with great interest.

As soon as he saw Kadambari, the prince's heart became agitated like ocean-waves at high tide. He reflected, 'What noble deeds have my eyes performed that they are permitted to feast on such beauty? Surely the Creator must have fashioned her out of digits gathered from everything in the Universe that is beautiful. He must have spent so much energy in moulding her that tears of fatigue must have fallen from his eyes, giving rise to all the lotuses in the world.' And as he was plunged in these reflections, his eyes met hers. Confused by the sight of Kadambari, yet illumined by her gaze, he stood for a moment as though rooted to the ground. Kadambari, too, was overwhelmed by Chandrapida's charm. As she rose from her seat, her jewels clashed and her silken robes fluttered through her heavy breathing. Her hand sought her heart, as if in an effort to touch Chandrapida's image that had entered in it.

Meanwhile Mahashweta had approached and Kadambari affectionately embraced her. Mahashweta introduced her to Chandrapida. "Dear Kadambari", she said, "In the land of Bharata there is a mighty king named Tarapida who has impressed his seal on the four oceans. This is his son Chandrapida, who has instinctively become my friend. It is rarely that we meet a person of such exceptional intellect, and blessed with such power and glory, who is so easily swayed by friendship. I have brought him here so that you

may see this specimen of Brahma's workmanship Please do not stand on ceremony with him Do not treat him as a stranger Look upon him as your friend " While Mahashweta was speaking, Kadambari looked at the prince sideways and her eyes were filled with tears of love Her smile pervaded the atmosphere like a cloud of dust raised by her heart which had so hastily set out Her delicate hand crept to her half-parted lips

Mahashweta caressed her friend tenderly She softly stroked her curly locks and touched the flowers with which she had adorned her ears After a while an attendant approached with a gem-studded betel-box Mahashweta asked Kadambari to honour the guest by offering him betel with her own hand After great hesitation, and with a trembling hand, Kadambari managed to overcome her coyness and plucked up courage to offer betel leaves to Chandrapida Her eyes rested on Mahashweta all the time, though her heart, if it had eyes, would have gazed upon Chandrapida The murmur of her bracelets seemed to say 'I am yours Take me for your slave '

A herald came and announced that Kadambari's parents were eager to meet Mahashweta Before leaving the pavilion, Mahashweta suggested that the prince should be lodged in the House of Jewels on a hillock in the royal garden Chandrapida went to the place allotted to him, followed by a number of serving-maids whom Kadambari selected to look after his comforts He was guided by his old acquaintance, Keyuraka, and was soon installed in the House of Jewels

IX

When he was gone, Kadambari sought the privacy of her own room and tried to master her agitation As she thought of her conduct in the presence of Chandrapida, she was filled with shame Modesty reproached her, self-respect rebuked her, youth warned of the pitfalls that awaited her Nobility censured her, propriety chided her for being so

easily swept off her feet by a stranger's charms. She blamed herself for forgetting Mahashweta's sorrow, for compromising her parents through her frivolous behaviour, and for overlooking her own vow not to hearken to the call of love. She reflected 'What can I do? How can I ever undo this error? I made a promise to share Mahashweta's grief. My resolve was announced before all my friends and every one in the land of *Gandharvas* knows about it. Now, when gossip about my infatuation spreads, I shall become a laughing-stock.' With these thoughts she decided to banish Chandrapida from her mind.

But the image of Chandrapida mocked at her resolve. It seemed to say 'To banish me is for you a farewell to life.' She was bewildered. Her eyes saw nothing, but her memory saw everything. Her hand did not hold a brush, but her fancy painted the picture of her beloved. She collapsed, and arose, and collapsed again. After a while she got up from her couch, moved up to the window as if in a trance, and stood gazing at the hillock on which Chandrapida was staying.

Chandrapida, in his turn, was equally agitated. He wondered what right he had to hope that he would so quickly earn the love of Kadambari. It appeared to him that Cupid was dangling a conjurer's wand to beguile and charm him. He tried to divert himself by conversing with the attendants sent by Kadambari, and by listening to music and poetic recitation. But nothing helped to soothe him. After a short while he went out to see the park and climbed to the top of the hill. Kadambari saw him and, under the pretext of watching for Mahashweta's return, she ascended to the terrace. There she sat looking at the hill, while her maids held a golden umbrella above her head. She leaned for support on her dearest companions, Tamalika and Madalekha. When Mahashweta returned she had to leave the terrace and go down. Without any enthusiasm she went through the routine of bath, prayer and other duties.

Chandrapida stayed on at the top of the hill. Even his food was carried there. He sat on a slab of emerald which

commanded a beautiful view of the green valley. By and by the day came to a close. The moon ascended with all the grace and majesty appropriate to the King of Heavenly Bodies. After a while, however, Chandrapida suddenly felt that the moon had become pale, and the moonlight had lost its brightness. He was baffled by this phenomenon for some time but when he looked in the direction of Kadambari he understood that her pearl necklace had eclipsed the moonlight. The princess was approaching the hill along with her companions. Chandrapida advanced to meet them. Kadambari stayed behind while Madalekha met the prince half-way and accompanied him to the emerald seat. She said, "Noble Prince, you have conquered the hearts of all of us. We have nothing left and so we cannot offer you any suitable gift. Kadambari has sent for you this necklace which emerged from the ocean when the Lord churned the primeval waters. The Creator himself gave it to Varuna, and Varuna passed it on to the king of the *Gandharvas*. The King bestowed it on Kadambari, who is dearer to him than his own life. It is a rare jewel. The like of it is not to be seen on heaven or earth."

Chandrapida accepted the gift with pleasure and gratitude. Kadambari went back to her apartment. Having seen Chandrapida from a distance, her longing to be with him became all the more unbearable. The moon mounted higher and higher. It was like Cupid's royal umbrella, like the ivory necklace of Night. Kadambari watched from her window as the prince rested on a pearl-white slab at the edge of a lotus-pool. Near the slab a pair of swans dozed blissfully, while *chakravaka* birds sang a dirge of separation. Unable to endure her parting from Chandrapida any longer, Kadambari sent Keyuraka to tell him that she was coming to visit him.

The prince rose hastily and saw Kadambari who had come without her royal insignia. She wore a single necklace. A single lotus petal decked her ear. In her simplicity she stood like the very goddess of moonrise. Approaching the slab she sat down on the ground. Chandrapida, too, sat

on the ground beside her, though Madalekha entreated him to resume his seat Kadambari made enquires about King Tarapida and Queen Vilasavati She expressed her curiosity about the world of mortals, and especially about Ujjayini All her questions were whispered to Madalekha, who put them to the prince This indirect conversation continued for some time and then Kadambari returned

Next day Chandrapida paid a return visit He found Kadambari in a bower where, along with Mahashweta, she was entertaining a company of wandering ascetic women Hymns were chanted and portions from the *Mahabharata* were recited When the ascetics left, Chandrapida looked at Mahashweta in such a way that she understood the silent appeal in his eyes She turned to Kadambari and said, "Dearest Kadambari, Chandrapida now wants to return His companions must be in distress But wherever he might go, his deep love will bind him to you for ever Like the sun and the day-lotus, like the moon and the lily of the night, you will always be together So please give him leave for the time being " The prince left Hemakuta with a heavy heart, carrying the image of Kadambari in his soul His mind was wholly imbued with memories of the brief time he had spent in her company She seemed to emerge mysteriously, trying to bar his way

At last, weighed down by the cruel suffering of separation, he reached Mahashweta's hermitage There he met his companions, who had discovered the hermitage by following the track left by Indrayudha Chandrapida spent the day narrating his adventures to Vaishampayana and Patralekha Early next morning he was surprised to see Keyuraka approaching him again The prince made anxious enquiries about the welfare of Kadambari and Mahashweta Keyuraka delivered a folded lotus-leaf, sealed by tender lotus-filaments set in sandal-paste Opening the leaf, Chandrapida discovered beautiful gifts sent by Mahashweta along with a letter Mahashweta had written 'Happy are those from whose eyes your form is never absent Your virtues, cool like moonlight when you are present, burn us

like the rays of the sun when you are away Without you the royal city of the *Gandharvas* is languid and lifeless You know that I am an ascetic and have renounced everything And yet my heart longs to see you again You can imagine what Kadambari is going through Think of her, and save her by returning to Hemakuta I am sending the necklace which Kadambari had presented to you and which you left behind on your couch '

Having read this letter Chandrapida felt exceedingly sad He wore the necklace sent by Mahashweta and asked Keyuraka about Kadambari's condition Keyuraka said, "Noble Prince, how shall I describe what the Princess is enduring? When you left Hemakuta, she climbed to the terrace and gazed at the House of Jewels where you had spent the night After a while she descended and went to the park She climbed the hill and longingly looked at every object with which you had come in contact She touched the rock on which your hand had rested, the tank by the side of which you had listened to the song of birds, the stream in which you had dipped your fingers before worshipping Siva, the crystal stone on which your food had been served and the pearly slab which still bore marks of the sandal juice with which your hands were scented Overcome by emotion, she hurried back to her room and threw herself upon her bed She was racked by the pain that had entered every fibre, muscle and joint of her body She passed the night open-eyed with bitter grief And at dawn she summoned me As soon as she saw me, she despatched me here to get news of you "

Chandrapida could not tarry a moment longer Indrayudha was hastily saddled, Vaishampayana was placed in charge of the camp, and the prince once more started for Hemakuta accompanied by Patralekha His eagerness, no less than his familiarity with the path, lent speed to his progress Very soon his eyes rejoiced as the dim outlines of Kadambari's palace emerged upon the horizon

Mahashweta was the first to greet him He bowed to her respectfully and then saluted Kadambari Keyuraka

presented Patralekha to the princess, extolling her qualities and describing her as 'Prince Chandrapida's most favoured friend' Kadambari thought 'How partial is Prajapati to women of the earth! They have the fortune to bask in the presence of a man like Chandrapida *Apsarases* and *Kinnaris* have no such luck!'

Chandrapida was now at the height of his happiness. He divided his time between Hemakuta and his own camp below the hermitage of Mahashweta. Patralekha and Kadambari had become such close friends that Chandrapida had to agree to leave Patralekha at Hemakuta. Vaishampayana was, of course, with him in the camp. One day a messenger from Ujjayini arrived. Chandrapida made anxious enquiries about the welfare of his parents. The messenger produced a letter and the prince opened it with trembling hands.

The letter was from King Tarapida. After assuring his son that there was no cause for anxiety, and that everyone was well, the king had written 'But, dearest Chandrapida, why have you been away for such a long time? Our hearts long for the sight of your sweet face. The queen pines for you. Shukanasa also is eagerly waiting for you and Vaishampayana. Enough of your conquests. Return to Ujjayini at once.' Chandrapida left Vaishampayana in charge of the camp, instructed that one of the senior officers should escort Patralekha back to Ujjayini, and himself made preparations to return. When everything was ready, he saddled Indrayudha and turned towards his native land.

His heart was weighed down by uneasiness. He reflected 'What will Kadambari think of me? I am proving myself unworthy of her love. I promised to be near her, and now the call of my parents compels me to leave so suddenly. My body is moving towards Ujjayini, but my heart will remain at Hemakuta. I have written a bond of slavery to Kadambari for a thousand births. The entire land of *Gandharvas* will look upon me as a deserter. And Mahashweta—how will she interpret my sudden departure? She brought me and Kadambari together in the hope

that her dearest friend would gain happiness And now I am shattering her dream '

Such were his thoughts as he slowly descended the slopes of Kailasa, leaving the world of *Gandharvas* behind him

X

A few days later Patralekha joined him, and he felt that she had become dearer to him than ever before, for had she not lived with Kadambari, who was the very breath of his life? Chandrapida was eager to get all the news from Hemakuta Through sheer impatience he drove away a pair of swans sleeping peacefully in a leafy bower Reclining on a bed of fresh hibiscus blossoms, he asked Patralekha to tell him about Kadambari's condition

Patralekha said, "My Lord, on the day you left Hemakuta the princess did not let me out of her sight for a single moment She spoke little, but gazed into my eyes and pressed my hand tenderly The next morning she left the winter palace and ascended to the summer house, leaning upon me for support She dismissed all her attendants, and pushed aside the tame geese that had followed us When a peacock persisted in demanding her attention, she gave him a piece of betel broken by her own teeth, as though it were a bribe to keep him quiet

For a while she remained in that bower like a mysterious wood-goddess At last, recovering her speech with great effort, she said, 'Dearest Patralekha, to whom shall I confide my suffering, if not to you? I am ashamed of my unmaidenly levity I have brought odium upon our race, pure as moonbeams Without my parents' approval, without the blessings of my elders, without any exchange of gifts or pictures, I have formed an attachment with a stranger Ever since I met Chandrapida, my heart, tender as a lotus-filament, is crushed into pulp Why has he treated me lightly? Does such conduct befit a prince of noble descent? His love has consumed first my reserve and then my heart Only by death can I cleanse myself Farewell, dearest friend,

until we meet in another birth '

'Do not speak in this way, Princess', I said 'What offence has Chandrapida committed? In what way has he been unfair to you?'

Kadambari said, 'Ah, that cunning villain comes to me in my dreams He bewilders my mind with vain desires He sends me messages filled with mad hopes and embraces me in secluded corners of the forest The flatterer dries my wet cheeks with his cool breath and draws me to himself He brooks no refusal. When I abuse him, he treats it as a jest, and when I rebuke him, he regards it as a familiarity granted by love '

From all this you can easily gather how deeply in love the princess is And I ask you, have you done well in leaving her in such a state?"

Hardly had Patralekha stopped speaking when a message arrived from Queen Vilasavati, summoning Chandrapida and Patralekha to her apartment His mother's tenderness, far from soothing the prince, only increased his agitation 'Alas, what shall I do!', he reflected, 'My dearest mother is sorrowful if I leave her even for a short while The subjects love me, and my friends shower their affection upon me And yet my mind is wholly taken up with thoughts of Kadambari Everything seems harsh to me in her absence '

As he was strolling on the bank of the Sipra river, lost in thought, he heard the clatter of hoofs The horsemen approached closer and very soon he could make out the features of their leader It was Keyuraka He dismounted at a distance, came near the prince respectfully, and bowed to him Chandrapida anxiously asked him if he had brought any message, and Keyuraka replied, "Noble Prince, I bring no message But I shall tell you what I saw Mahashweta returned to her hermitage as soon she heard that you had suddenly taken the road to Ujjayini As for Kadambari, she merely gazed upon me with tearful eyes She is enduring great torture And I have come here to tell you that she will not long survive the agony of her separation from you "

Chandrapida made up his mind to visit Hemakuta before it was too late. And now he felt an intense longing to meet Vaishampayana. Since the days of their childhood the two friends had shared each other's anxieties. They were accustomed to derive solace from one another's company in moments of agitation. Chandrapida sent Patralekha ahead, asking her to assure Kadambari that he would soon follow. And then he sent an urgent message to Vaishampayana, begging him to return as speedily as he could.

But after spending a sleepless night Chandrapida, without waiting for a reply to his message, himself started on the road to Dashapura. To his amazement he found that Vaishampayana was not present in the camp. He summoned one of the chieftains and asked him for news of Vaishampayana. The chieftain said, "Alas, Vaishampayana is strangely distraught. We urged him to return to Ujjayini, but he refused. He has made up his mind to spend the rest of his life near the holy lake of Achchoda, occupying his mind solely in the worship of Siva. We left him in a pitiable state. His melancholy appearance baffled us."

With a heavy heart Chandrapida returned to Ujjayini and sought his parents' permission to make another journey to the Himalayas in search of Vaishampayana. When he went to pay his respects to Vaishampayana's father, the latter expressed strong disapproval of his son's conduct. "Men like Vaishampayana", he said, "are harbingers of evil. He did not fear the wrath of his king, nor did he give a moment's thought to his mother's condition. He was born only in order to cause grief." When Shukanasa spoke in this vein, Chandrapida's father tried to pacify him. He said, "Do not judge him so harshly in his absence. Let him be brought here first, then there will be time enough to censure him."

Having obtained his parents' blessings, Chandrapida made ready to set out in search of Vaishampayana. The astrologers were not happy, but they tactfully said, "The conjunction of the planets does not seem to favour your journey. But ultimately it is for the King to determine the auspici-

ous moment for every undertaking " But Chandrapida started, while Queen Vilasavati, who seemed to have a premonition of disaster, shed tears of grief

The prince rode fast, and yet he had traversed only half the distance from Ujjayini to the Achchoda lake before the rainy season set in All the terrors of storm and lightning found their counterpart in Chandrapida's own heart, so intense was his agitation Impatiently brushing aside the advice of his companions, and giving no thought to bodily comfort, he continued his journey and reached the hermitage of Mahashweta

He found Mahashweta at the entrance of the cave, supported by Taralika She was weeping bitterly, and suffering had left deep marks upon her countenance The prince thought 'This is an evil portent indeed I had hoped that she would express great joy at my arrival, but her sorrow seems to have been redoubled at my sight God forbid that any ill should have befallen Kadambari' Concealing his anxiety, Chandrapida asked Taralika how every one was faring She silently pointed to Mahashweta, who unfolded a story as shameful as it was tragic

XI

"When Keyuraka told me that you had left for Ujjayini", Mahashweta said, "My heart was weighed down by disappointment You know how deep is my attachment to Kadambari, and how eager I was that she should find happiness through you Your departure dashed my hopes to pieces, and I came here determined to undergo harsher penance than ever before

Near the lake I saw a Brahmin youth The moment he set eyes upon me, he began to behave like one possessed Though a perfect stranger, he dared to give me advice He tried to turn me away from my ascetic life and said, 'Fair maiden, why do you waste in such stern penance a body that is tender like a garland of jasmune buds' If you turn away from earthly joys, Cupid bends his bow

in vain, and the moon casts its mellow light upon the horizon to no purpose' I ignored his words and bade Taralika keep him at a distance. But he hovered around the hermitage, and I felt frightened.

One evening, while Taralika was asleep and I was thinking of Pundarika, the Brahmin youth approached me and said, 'O moon-faced maiden, I am being slain by the Moon, who is Cupid's ally. My life is in your hands. It is the duty of ascetics to grant protection to those who seek it. If you do not bestow yourself on me, I shall assuredly perish.' In a voice choking with anger I exclaimed 'How is it, you wretch, that a thunderbolt did not strike you down as you uttered these words? It seems you do not possess the elements out of which the human frame is composed, otherwise earth, air, fire and water would have destroyed you for your wickedness. You have spoken like a parrot, without thought of right or wrong, and I lay upon you this curse "enter a birth suited to your speech." Then I raised my eyes towards the moon and said, 'O Blessed Moon! If ever, since Pundarika left me, I have given a moment's thought to another man, let my curse fail. But if I have been faithful to his memory, let this false lover fall into a parrot-existence.'

As soon I uttered these syllables, the youth fell dead upon the ground. I do not know whether it was the power of my true love that destroyed him, or his own sins. He lay lifeless, like a tree uprooted from the earth. His attendants soon came looking for him. And it was from them, dear Chandrapida, that I learnt with great sorrow that he was your friend, Vaishampayana."

Chandrapida could not stand the shock of this revelation. The knowledge that his dearest friend was guilty of such discourtesy towards the saintly-natured Mahashweta caused him such acute shame that his heart sank and he collapsed. In a broken voice he muttered, "Alas, I was not destined to see Kadambari!" And then the soul deserted his body. While Taralika was reproaching Mahashweta for her narration of Vaishampayana's folly, and while Chandrapida's

followers were giving vent to bitter lamentation, Kadambari arrived there. She had come on the pretext of visiting Mahashweta and she was whispering into Patralekha's ears words of feigned anger, declaring that she would never speak to Chandrapida again even if he visited Hemakuta.

But when she saw him lying dead, she fell to the ground with a piercing cry. After a while she recovered consciousness and stood with quivering limbs, like a tender creeper under the blow of a sharp axe. Suddenly she stood erect, her gaze became steady, and her aspect acquired a firmness that was far more frightening than her agitation had been. Patralekha implored her to find an outlet for her grief in tears, lest her heart should break under the weight of her unnatural steadiness.

Kadambari replied, "Foolish girl! How should my heart break now, having withstood such a sight? I have won the body of my beloved. Living or dead, it is enough to calm my grief. It is for me that he came here and lost his life. Shall I repay the great honour he has done me by shedding tears? And what sorrow is there now? The moment of our eternal union has arrived. Soon shall I join him in the land where no one can part us."

Then, turning to her maid, Kadambari continued, "Madalekha, see that the mango saplings I planted are properly tended. Let the *marna*, Kalindi, and the parrot, Parhasa, be freed from their cages. Let the sweet little mongoose that once rested in my lap now rest in yours. And see that my pleasure-hill is given as a gift to some calm-souled hermit. I shall now cling to my dear Lord's feet, and allay on the funeral pyre the fever that consumes my heart."

With these words she bent down, lifted Chandrapida's feet, and placed them in her own lap. As soon as she did so, a mysterious light shot up from the Prince's body and a heavenly voice was heard to say, "Mahashweta, once again I speak to you words of consolation. The body of Pundarika, nourished in my world, is awaiting reunion with you. The body of Chandrapida is also imperishable, having received

the touch of Kadambari's hands His soul has, by reason of a curse, momentarily taken leave of his body You must preserve his frame carefully, let it not be burnt or cast into water Kadambari and yourself must guard it until the curse ends "

While every one gazed at the sky in wonder as the heavenly voice was heard, Patralekha unexpectedly seized Indrayudha from his groom and exclaimed, "We may remain here, but you must join your master How can he start on his long journey to Heaven without a steed?" With these words she plunged into the Achchoda lake, along with the horse Immediately a young ascetic emerged from the lake and approached Mahashweta "Princess of the *Gandharvas*", said the ascetic, "do you not recognise me? I am Kapinjala, the friend and companion of Pundarika "

Mahashweta bowed to him and said, "Blessed Kapinjala, am I so deficient in virtue that I could ever forget you? And yet I cannot blame you if you think ill of me, since I continue to live even after Pundarika, the lord of my life, has gone to heaven But enough of this I am dying to know what has befallen you and your friend during this period "

Kapinjala said, "As you know, when Pundarika was carried off by a heavenly being, I flew in hot pursuit All the gods, sitting in their respective chariots, gaped in wonder as I followed the heavenly being through the sky At last we reached the world of the moon, where the being laid Pundarika's body upon a couch and said, 'You must know, my friend, that I am the spirit of the moon Once, when I was emerging on the horizon, Pundarika cursed me because my beams were causing him agony The curse was that I should myself be subjected to the tortures of love on earth At this I uttered a counter-curse that he and I should endure the same joys and sorrows Later I came to know that he was in love with Mahashweta, whose race traces its origin to my beams I was sorry that by cursing Pundarika I had unwittingly condemned Mahashweta to suffering But now that cannot be helped I have

brought his body here, and I sustain it through the power of my light I have tried to comfort Mahashweta You must now go to Pundarika's father He is a great sage, and might be able to find a way of neutralising the curse'

As soon as the Moon stopped speaking, I rushed in search of Pundarika's father Unfortunately, in my excitement I leapt over another heavenly being who was riding in a chariot He was angry and pronounced this curse 'Since you have leapt over me like a horse, may you be born as a horse on earth' I pacified him and assured him that I had meant no discourtesy He said, 'Well, the curse cannot be withdrawn But I decree that when your rider dies you may be freed from the curse by bathing in a lake'

I implored the heavenly being to arrange that in my existence as a horse I should be of service to Pundarika, who was destined to be born on earth along with the Moon Touched by my affection, he told me that the Moon would be born as the son of King Tarapida of Ujjayini, Pundarika as the son of his minister, Shukanasa, and I would be the Prince's steed That is how I came to be born as Indrayudha I may now reveal that I deliberately brought Chandrapida here in pursuit of the *Kinnaras* And if his friend, Vaishampayana, declared his love for you it was only because of the feelings implanted in his heart during his former birth as Pundarika "

Having heard this sequence of events from Kapinjala, Mahashweta repented the harsh words she had said to Vaishampayana "Ah, Pundarika", she exclaimed, "you kept your love for me through another birth and I spurned you It seems I have been granted a long life only to deprive you of life again and again!" Kapinjala said, "Princess, you are not to be blamed Now you must not grieve, but continue your penance By the power of your austerities you shall soon be united with my friend "

Kadambari asked Kapinjala what had become of Patralekha He said he knew nothing of her fate Then, bidding farewell to Mahashweta and Kadambari, he continued his journey in search of Pundarika's father, Shwetaketu

Meanwhile, King Tarapida and Queen Vilasavati were exceedingly anxious for Chandrapida's welfare. At last, unable to bear the suspense, they travelled to Lake Achchoda, accompanied by Shukanasa and his wife. Queen Vilasavati broke into piteous lamentation when she saw the lifeless body of Chandrapida. By and by, the entire story of Chandrapida and the curse that had worked against him was made known to the King and Queen. They stayed on near the hermitage. And when they saw the prince's body growing brighter day by day, they felt cheered by the thought that he would regain consciousness and marry the princess of the *Gandharvas*.

Vilasavati said to Kadambari, "Be of good cheer, my daughter-in-law. But for you, who could have looked after the body of my dearest child? Surely you must be composed entirely of *amrita*, that your touch has bestowed so much lustre on Chandrapida's countenance." As for King Tarapida, he found his way of life entirely transformed in the forest. Instead of friends, he had fawns, instead of palaces, he had shady trees, and his silken robes were replaced by bark garments. But he put a cheerful countenance on his circumstances, and looked forward to the joy of seeing Chandrapida restored to life.

XII

The parrot continued "Such was the story unfolded by the sage, Jabali. When he had finished his narrative, he turned to his disciples and said, 'This is the lovesick youth who became Vaishampayana, son of Shukanasa. By his own fault, and by the power of Mahashweta's penance, he has now taken the form of a parrot. Just look at the gallant!'

I felt ashamed as all the events came back to me. A great yearning came over me to know what had happened to the Prince, to Mahashweta, and to Kadambari. I implored the sage to tell me about them. He looked at me scornfully and said, 'What! Even now you have not learnt to curb your impatience! Ask me when your wings are grown.'

One of the hermits took me to his hut and fed me. I was plunged in sorrow at the thought that years must elapse before the end of the curse. Just then Kapinjala reached the hermitage. He lifted me up with great tenderness, placed me on his shoulder, and said, "Your father, Shwetaketu, has come to know of your plight through his divine insight. He has now begun a religious sacrifice to free you from your curse. Your mother, Lakshmi, is helping him in the rites. They send you their blessings and ask you to be patient." With these words Kapinjala flew into the sky and rushed off to participate in the sacrifice.

After a few days, when my wings had grown, I could no longer bear my separation from Mahashweta and set off towards the Himalayas. But on the way I fell into the snare set by a *Chandala*. I entreated him to release me as I was on my way to meet my beloved, but he laughed at me. "You are intended for the *Chandala* princess", he said, "She has heard of your gifts and wants to keep you as a pet." And so I, the son of a great sage, was cast among a tribe whom even barbarians treat with contempt.

The hard-hearted *Chandala* carried me to his settlement. What an evil place! The people who lived there were clothed in horrible attire. They were unleashing their hounds, training their falcons or mending their snares. They thought of nothing but hunting. The enclosures of their huts were made of skulls, and on the roads there were enormous heaps of bones.

The *Chandala* princess put me in a cage, and said, "I shall tame him all right. Let him show his wilfulness here!" But when I refused all food for a few days, she spoke to me tenderly. "Don't be stupid, little parrot", she said. "It is unnatural for living creatures to spurn food. It is no use thinking of a former birth. You are now an animal, and the laws of animal life demand that nourishment should be imbibed." I was surprised at her wisdom and obeyed her.

After many months, when I had become a full-grown parrot, I woke up one day to find myself in this golden cage. The entire barbarian settlement looked like a city.

of gods The *Chandala* maiden was dressed in gorgeous clothes I marvelled at the transformation, but before I could ask what it all meant I was brought into your august presence

Such is the story of my life as a parrot and of my former birth I have related everything that I remembered I do not know what the future holds, nor can I imagine why I have been brought to your palace "

XIII

King Shudraka heard the parrot's story with amazement When the parrot ceased speaking, the king sent for the *Chandala* maiden and asked her who she was The maiden said, "You, Oh Moon, have heard the story of your own past birth You have also heard of Vaishampayana, who is the same as Pundarika, and who is at present living as a parrot I must now reveal that I am no *Chandala* woman, I am Lakshmi, the mother of this Vaishampayana I brought him here so that he might be saved from his own impatience until the sacrifice undertaken by his father is safely over His curse is about to end Now may you both leave your mortal bodies " With these words she vanished into the sky

The king remembered his former birth and said, "Dear Pundarika, let us rejoice that both of us are about to be released from the curse simultaneously " But even as he uttered these words, Cupid twanged his bow with deadly effect, and the Moon fell desperately in love with Kadambari Meanwhile Kadambari herself was guarding the body of Chandrapida with great devotion When the day of the Spring Festival arrived, she anointed it with sandal-paste and decked it with flowers Then, unable to restrain herself, she embraced Chandrapida

Suddenly the prince regained consciousness, clasped her closely, and said, "Dearest Kadambari, your embrace has revived me I have now left the body of King Shudraka and come back to you Vaishampayana, too, has been

liberated from his curse " While the Moon, or Chandrapida, spoke thus, Pundarika descended from the sky, accompanied by Kapinjala With great joy Kadambari informed Mahashweta of their advent Finally King Tarapida and Queen Vilasavati, together with Shukanasa and his wife, joined the two couples And so happiness came to all of them

One day Kadambari asked her husband, "How is it that, while all of us have been reunited, no one knows what has happened to Patralekha?" The prince replied "How could Patralekha be here, dearest Kadambari? She is none other than my wife, Rohini When I was cursed, and became Chandrapida instead of the Moon, she grieved for me and descended in the world of mortals to serve me She has now returned to the heavenly home" Kadambari stood speechless when she heard of Rohini's selfless devotion and loftiness

Chandrapida, following his father's example, gave up his kingdom He entrusted the affairs of state to Pundarika, and began to divide his time between Hemakuta and Ujjayini Sometimes, out of his affection for Rohini, he would also visit the world of the Moon, and sometimes Pundarika would invite him to the dwelling-place of his mother, Lakshmi And, as Chandrapida enjoyed an eternity of bliss in the company of Kadambari, so did Pundarika reach the pinnacle of happiness with his beloved Mahashweta

Dashakumaracharita

OR

The Adventures of the Ten Princes

DANDIN,
Late Seventh Century A D

DANDIN, who lived in the latter half of the seventh century A D, had the rare distinction of achieving equal renown as a critic and as a creative artist. His *Kavyadarsha* is recognised as one of the great classics of Sanskrit aesthetics. And his *Dashakumaracharita*—*The Adventures of the Ten Princes*—has been a source of undiminished pleasure for almost thirteen centuries.

'*The Adventures of the Ten Princes*' is unique in ancient Indian literature for several reasons.

In the first place, the plots and characters in this work are entirely new. The author has not fallen back upon any 'sources', he has not borrowed from legend, tradition, epic or scripture. His stories are products of pure invention.

Secondly, the '*Adventures*' is one of the very few works of ancient literature that are completely free from didactic or religious purpose. Here we have good stories, well told—and there is nothing more to them, no moral strings attached. The heroes are pure adventurers. Some of them can only be described as accomplished knaves. They freely quote the

scandals of gods and goddesses to justify their own deeds, and they do not hesitate to employ nuns as go-betweens. This does not mean that they are vicious or depraved—they are simply amoral. Their escapades shock and delight us at the same time. For all their impudence and swashbuckling, Rajavahana and his companions are likable young men. They are full of jollity and good fellowship. There is nothing petty even about their lapses, and there is nothing tragic or solemn even about their misfortunes.

Thirdly, the style of 'Adventures of the Ten Princes' presents an extraordinary combination of the high-flown and the colloquial. On the one hand, all the traditional 'ornaments' of poetry have been introduced in prose—internal rhymes, long compounds, euphonies that linger in the reader's mind, and phrases rich in suggestiveness. On the other hand there are unorthodox constructions and 'punchy' expressions derived from popular rather than scholastic usage.

But the most striking quality of this work is the easy flow of narration. The stories never flag. The author does not give the impression of being in a hurry—he has plenty of time for digression and leisurely description. And yet the action is never seriously impeded. Every story is full of movement. There are unexpected turns, strange situations, rapid changes in the destinies of the dramatic personae. History, too, plays its part in colouring the narrative. It is broad rather than subtle, but it fits in very well with the general atmosphere of drollery and carefree banter.

Here, then, we have literature for pure pleasure. As an entertainer, says Mr. R. S. R. 'Adventures of the Ten Princes' can be classed with the Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

The Adventures of the Ten Princes

THERE was once a king named Rajahansa, who ruled at Kusumapura, the capital city of the land of Magadha. Rajahansa had earned great renown by his heroic deeds. The perfume of his glory was so pervasive that it seemed to plug the chunks of the horizon. Even the gods sang his praises. Indeed, they compared his fame to autumn moonlight, jasmine blossoms and pearls—so pure and noble were his deeds. The king had a wise and beautiful queen named Vasumati. Her locks were black like a cluster of bees, her eyes were like the silvery fishes inscribed on Cupid's banner, her supple neck was like a conch-shell which announces victory, her feet were like water-lilies, and when she sighed, it appeared as though breezes were blowing from Malabar. The king and the queen lived happily together and were devoted to each other.

The king had three loyal and intelligent advisers: Dharmapala, Sitavarman and Padmodbhava. Dharmapala had three sons: Sumantra, Sumitra, and Kamapala. The sons of Sitavarman were called Sumati and Satyavarman, and those of Padmodbhava were named Ratnodbhava and Sushruta.

Thus the three counsellors had seven sons between them. Of these, four remained at Kusumapura while the remaining three left the city and wandered far and wide for different reasons. Satyavarman went away because he was pious and

wanted to lead the life of a pilgrim Kamapala was given over to pleasure and roamed the earth in search of adventure Ratnodbhava had an aptitude for trade, and sailed the seas in pursuit of monetary gain

King Rajahansa was on terms of enmity with Manasara, the ruler of Malava Their relations became more and more hostile and ultimately Magadha and Malava went to war A furious battle raged The war-drums seemed to drown the sound of the ocean's waves At last the army of Malava was routed and King Manasara was taken prisoner Rajahansa treated his adversary with mercy and reinstated him in his kingdom

Manasara was haughty Defeat on the field of battle rankled in his heart He vowed to avenge his humiliation For a long time he was engaged in acts of self-mortification By practising stern penance he propitiated Siva and won from him a weapon of unearthly power—a fearful club with which the wielder could infallibly destroy *one's* enemy, however brave or powerful With this weapon in his hand Manasara prepared for war once again

King Rajahansa was informed of these developments by his spies The ministers advised him to retreat to a fortress, but the king was too proud to accept this suggestion He sallied forth to resist the enemy with a picked force The two kings faced each other in battle Manasara flung at Rajahansa the club that he had acquired from Siva The weapon killed the driver of the chariot while the king of Magadha fell to the ground unconscious Luckily for him the horses were unhurt and, though unguided, carried the king to the Vindhya forest, where the women of the palace had already been sent Manasara overran the rich territory of Magadha and occupied Kusumapura The ministers, though wounded, escaped death When the cool breeze of dawn revived their senses, they looked for the king everywhere and at last returned to the queen deeply dejected Vasumati, learning from them about the destruction of the army and the disappearance of the king, made up her mind to put an end to her life The counsellors

dissuaded her from such a course and reminded her that she carried within her the unborn child of Rajahansa. For a while she listened to their entreaties and calmed herself. But at dead of night, when all eyes were closed in slumber, Queen Vasumatī silently left the camp and came to a sheltered spot in the forest. She tied the upper half of her garment to the branch of a tree. Then, praying for death, she cried, "Oh my beloved, may God unite us again in the next birth."

Now the king, as it happened, had taken shelter under that very tree when consciousness had returned to him. He recognised the queen's voice and called to her faintly. She rushed towards him and her face blossomed like a lotus. Presently, the ministers reached there and attended to the king's injuries.

Through the loving care of his wife and his ministers the king's wounds healed quickly. But, thinking of the fate that had overtaken his kingdom, he sank in gloom. The queen tried to console him. "Oh King", she said, "of all the monarchs on earth you are the most glorious. And yet today you have to hide in the depths of the Vindhya forest. But fortune is like that. In olden times mighty kings like Harishchandra and Rama endured dire misfortune. However, when their bad days were over, they recovered their kingdoms. And so shall it be with you. Submit for a time to the working of fate, and do not despair."

Rajahansa endured his sorrow for a few days. And then he made up his mind to embrace a life of asceticism. He approached Vamadeva, a wise and pious hermit, and asked to be initiated in the ways of ascetics. But Vamadeva said, "My friend, there is no need of such self-denial. Your kingdom will be regained. A son will soon be born to you who will destroy all your enemies."

The hermit's prophecy was soon confirmed and a son was born to queen Vasumatī. The moment of his birth was auspicious. He carried all the marks of royalty and future glory. The little prince was given the name of Rajavahana. About the same time sons were also born to the counsellors.

Sumati, Sumantra, Sumitra and Sushruta. They were named Pramati, Mitragupta, Mantragupta and Vishruta respectively. Through a series of strange events the sons of the three counsellors who had left Kusumapura many years ago were brought back to the Vindhya forest and brought to King Rajahansa. Their names were Arthapala, Somadatta and Pushpodhbava. In addition to these sons of his ministers, the king adopted two more children of royal blood and gave them the names of Apaharavarman and Upaharavarman. Thus King Rajahansa had the pleasure of seeing himself surrounded by Prince Rajavahana and his nine companions. They were all of high descent and grew up together. The *Ten Princes*, as they were popularly called, were devoted to each other.

The boys were entrusted to the care of expert teachers. They mastered grammar and all the local dialects. They became well-versed in the scriptures and proficient in all branches of literature—poetry, drama, romance, traditional tales, mythology, and elaborate fiction. They digested the writings of Kautilya and others on the conduct of life. They acquired a thorough knowledge of Astronomy, Ethics, Logic, Metaphysics and related subjects. They cultivated a gift for the lute and other musical instruments. Their choral singing was a source of delight to all audiences. They learnt the mysterious powers of drugs, magical spells and precious gems. In order to make them fit for political life, all the tricks of diplomacy, rhetoric and equivocation were imparted to them. And they were, of course, given a complete military education, both theoretical and practical.

When King Rajahansa saw this princely band, radiant and in the full bloom of youth, he thought 'Ah, it is hard on my enemies.' And this thought brought him great joy.

One day, as the king sat surrounded by this graceful brotherhood of princely lads, the sage Vamadeva visited him. The king bowed respectfully, and the boys bent down to touch the hermit's feet. Vamadeva embraced them warmly and uttered a benediction. Then he turned towards the king and said, "Oh King, your son has grown into a strong

and handsome youth Surely the time has come when he and his companions should step out into the wide world and subdue vast territories Rajavahana is capable of enduring any hardship Let him march to the conquest of the four directions " King Rajahansa saw the wisdom of this advice He gave the prince proper instructions, formally appointed the nine companions as Rajavahana's counsellors, and at an auspicious moment sent them out on a life of adventure and victory

And so the ten comrades marched out into the vast world After a few days, as they were making their way through the dense forest, they came upon a man whose body was hard like iron and scarred by welts Rajavahana was surprised to see such a man wearing the sacred thread of brahminhood, and asked him to explain the paradox

The Brahmin said "It is true, Oh Prince, that I was born of the highest caste My name is Matanga In my youth I became wayward and eventually fell in with a band of savages I even joined some of their expeditions One day, as they were about to kill an innocent Brahmin, I rebelled There was a violent quarrel, and in trying to save the victim I was killed But when I reached the lower world, the God of Death called his secretary and said, 'Chitrugupta, why has this man come here? His time has not yet arrived Teach him a few salutary lessons and send him back ' So I returned to earth and have lived a hard life ever since The rest of my story is meant only for your ears I cannot reveal it in the presence of your friends "

With these words Matanga took Rajavahana aside and resumed, "Noble Prince, early this morning Siva himself came to me in a dream and communicated a secret There is a cave in Dandakaranya where a copper-plate has been hidden On this plate are engraved the details of a ceremony which bestows upon the performer the overlordship of the lower regions Siva also told me that a great prince would arrive today and become my companion Sir, your arrival fulfils the divine decree Let us set out as soon as possible "

Bent upon adventure, Rajavahana agreed Stealing

away from his slumbering companions at midnight, he joined the Brahmin. The two started on their quest of the precious copper-plate. Next morning the nine comrades searched the forest far and wide but found no trace of their leader. For a while they fell into deep dejection. But their inherent courage soon asserted itself, and they made ready to scour the earth's remotest regions. Agreeing on a rendezvous, they scattered in different directions.

After a series of adventures the ten princes met at an agreed spot. They embraced each other warmly and made affectionate enquiries about each other's health and prosperity. Then at the suggestion of their leader, Rajavahana, each related his exploits while the other listened eagerly.

The Story of Apaharavarman

Apaharavarman had a wonderful adventure to relate. Addressing his leader he said, "Your Majesty, on that fateful day when you left us to serve a Brahmin, and all your comrades searched for you, I too started my wanderings. I happened to learn that there was a great sage named Marichi who had gained supernatural insight through the practice of austerities. This sage was said to be living outside the city of Champa, the capital of the Anga country. As I was anxious to learn your whereabouts, I thought that he might help me, and so I travelled to the city of Champa. I made my way to the hermitage on the bank of the Ganga that had been described to me. And there, sitting under a mango tree, I discovered a hermit. He was pale and evidently in a state of utter depression. Nevertheless, I received from him all the attentions that a guest might expect. After a while I asked, 'Can you tell me where the saintly Marichi can be found? I am eager to learn from him the route followed by a dear friend of mine who has set out on a distant journey. I understand the sage has miraculous powers of penetration.'

The hermit heaved a deep and burning sigh. And then he related this strange tale.

'Sir, such a sage once indeed lived in this hermitage. One day a courtesan named Kamamanjari visited him. She had won fame as the most beautiful among the gay women of Champa. But at that moment she was in deep dejection, her locks were dishevelled, and tears streamed down her cheeks. Hardly had she paid homage to the sage than a group of her relatives arrived there, headed by her mother. They all fell at the hermit's feet. Marichi, though puzzled, consoled them in gentle words and then, turning to the courtesan, asked her the source of her distress. With an expression in which shame, despair and dignity were strangely mingled, she said, "Holy Sir, I am but a vessel of sin and I have come to take refuge at your feet in the hope of resurrection."

At this point the mother lifted her hands in protest and said, "Sir, have mercy on me. From the day of her birth I have cared for this daughter of mine. I have regulated her nourishment so that she might develop stateliness, health, a fine complexion and alertness. I have instructed her in all the arts that a courtesan must learn. She has received thorough training in dance, music—both instrumental and vocal—acting and painting. She has been taught the art of discrimination with regard to food, perfumes and flowers. Conversation, grammar, gracefulness in speech and delicacy in writing, logical skill—in all these fields has she received the best education that was available. Nor have I neglected matters of a more practical nature. All the arts of extracting the last coin from dandies, of recovering bad debts, of wheedling gifts, have been placed at her command. In addition to all this I have spent endless amounts of money and energy on publicising her accomplishments and her charms.

And how does she repay me for all this? By throwing herself away on a lover! She spent a whole month with a worthless Brahmin youth, a fellow from nowhere, whose only fortune is his face. By this folly she has already offended a number of rich admirers. If this goes on we shall all be paupers. And when I scolded her, she flew into a

temper and took to the woods. If she is obstinate, we shall all stay here and starve to death. There is nothing else that we can do." And the mother broke into fresh lamentations.

The hermit, moved by the mother's words, tried to dissuade the courtesan from her resolve. He said, "My dear young lady, have you any idea how difficult life can be in the forest? If you are hoping for final salvation, please remember that rare and profound insight is required for understanding what salvation is. But if you are looking forward to the joys of paradise, you must know that renunciation is not necessary. Anyone who fulfills the duties of his or her station sincerely can attain to paradise. So you had better give up your visionary scheme and accept your mother's judgment."

But Kamamanjari refused to listen to this advice and said, "Your Holiness, if I do not find shelter at your feet only the God of Fire can save me from my miseries."

Now the hermit was in a difficult position. After some reflection he took the mother aside and said, "Go home for the time being. I am sure this delicate creature, accustomed to luxury, will soon tire of her life here. She will come to her senses in a few days." The relatives were pacified and returned to the city.

From that moment onwards the courtesan showed complete devotion to the hermit. She wore a neat and simple dress, gave no thought to ornaments, watered the plants in the hermitage and gathered flowers for ceremonial worship. She offered perfumes, garlands, incense and lamps. She danced and sang in honour of Siva, discussed subtle problems of morality with the hermit, and talked solemnly about the Supreme Being. Well, the net result was that in a very short time she had him madly in love with her.

One day, when she felt sure that he was thoroughly smitten, she said with a little smile, "How foolish are those who consider money and love in comparison with virtue." Marichi said, "Tell me, my dear. By what percentage do you value virtue above money and love?" At this Kamaman-

jari—clever hussy that she was—said, “Oh, Sir! how can I teach a holy hermit the bigness of virtue? I am such a poor, ignorant thing Still, I must say one thing It is true that without virtue money or love are as nothing But virtue is not hurt if you pursue money and love—just a little bit Think of the Gods Brahma pursued Tilottama Siva, Vishnu, Prajapati, Indra—none of them abstained from love altogether The fact is that when a soul is purified by virtue no dirt can stick to it And so I conclude that money and love come nowhere near virtue ”

These clever arguments did the trick The sage was swayed violently by passion and said, “How wise you are, little one! Now I understand how unnecessary it is for virtue to avoid indulgence of the senses But I know nothing either of money or of love I must learn as much about them as I can ”

Kamamanjari promptly offered to educate him, and the holy man, forgetting his vows, yielded to her charms Soon she brought a carriage and carried the simpleton off with her They drove through splendid streets until the carriage stopped outside her home

Next day the courtesan lavished all the luxuries of her apartment on her new acquisition He was scrubbed and anointed, scented and garlanded Then she took him with her to the king's palace In a summer-house inside the palace-garden the king sat at leisure, surrounded by a number of young ladies When Kamamanjari arrived, the king smiled and asked her to be seated along with the sage She curtsied and sat down Thereupon a charming young woman stood up, addressed the king, and said, “Your Majesty, I accept defeat Kamamanjari has won the bet ” At this the entire crowd congratulated Kamamanjari and the king lavished gifts upon her Meanwhile the sage Marichi was utterly bewildered The courtesan turned towards him and said, “Thank you, Sir I am deeply obliged to you You may now return to the forest and resume your vocation of leading a good life ”

The sage, who was by this time madly in love with her,

cried in despair, "My dear, what does all this mean? How can you be so cruel? What has happened to your love for me?"

She replied with a sweet smile, "Did you not see that girl who just confessed defeat? You see, we once had a quarrel, in the course of which she sneered at me and said, 'You boast as if you had conquered Marichi himself' These words cut me to the quick and I entered into a bet with her I made up my mind to conquer you And I have done it, too Thank you so much"

The poor hermit cursed the moment he had set eyes on her and returned to the forest And that poor hermit, Sir, was none other than myself'

* * *

Apaharavarman continued "Such was the story of Marichi He assured me, however, that he would soon regain his supernatural insight through penance and promised to help me as soon as he had done so He advised me to remain at Champa in the meanwhile I stayed with him for the night and, when the first rays of the sun had flared up like a forest fire, I said farewell to him and started for the city Before I reached the city I came to a monastery by the side of the road Just outside the monastery a Jain monk sat under an *asoka* tree His condition was indeed pitiable and he was clearly undergoing acute mental agony Tears streamed down his face and dislodged the dust that had accumulated there I approached him and said, 'My friend, you are a monk and you are crying Austerities and tears go ill together Will you tell me the source of your miseries?'

'You are most kind, Sir', he said, 'I am Vasupalita, and my father is Nidhupalita, one of the most prosperous merchants in the city of Champa As you see, Providence has made me ugly Now as it happens, one of my acquaintances is the handsomest man in the town He has, however, very meagre resources One day we were discussing the respective powers of good looks and money Some of our

boon companions egged us on and fomented a quarrel between us. After we had become thoroughly heated up, the rogues who had made us quarrel pretended to pacify us. They said, "Friends, you are both in the wrong. Neither a handsome face nor a well-filled purse is by itself a proof of power. The best man is he who attracts the most beautiful girl in the town. Here, in Champa, Kamamanjari is universally accepted as being without a peer. Let it be put this way—he whom she prefers will be declared the victor."

We agreed to this test and both of us sent her our proposals. To my utter delight I found that she preferred me—at least that is how it seemed to me at the time. She directed a sidelong glance at me, a glance that was at once a flower and a fetter. My rival's face seemed to fall. I thought myself to be the happiest of men and offered Kamamanjari everything that I possessed—my money, my house, all my precious possessions and my person. When I had nothing left but a piece of cloth she cast me off as a beggar. I became the subject of ridicule all over the city. Unable to endure the taunts of my acquaintances I came away with a Jain monk and entered a monastery. But after a while I repented my action. I am of Brahmin origin and my forefathers never deviated from the path indicated by revelation and sacred tradition. I could not endure the blasphemies of the Jains. Abandoning the monastery I have come to this clump of *asoka* trees, and here I am. I weep because there is nothing else that I can do.

Deeply moved by this recital, I tried to console him. I promised to help him and to compel the deceitful courtesan to restore his wealth.

When I returned to the city I came to know that there were a number of wealthy traders who were misers to the core. It occurred to me that they should be taught the perishable nature of worldly prosperity, and to this end I decided to acquire a scientific knowledge of the art of relieving people of their possessions, in short, I fell in with thieves and gamblers. I observed their tactics, their flattery

of the strong and threats to the weak, and their instinct for picking the right partners. I soon acquired a mastery of all the arts of deception. During my association with this set I gained two things that were valuable—a store of gold coins, and a trustworthy friend named Vimardaka.

From Vimardaka I learnt all the secrets of the city. I studied every prominent house from the point of view of the occupant's wealth and character. I provided myself with a black cloak and all the tools that an artist in my position would require—cords, hooks, jemmies, scissors, a dark lantern and so on. Thus equipped, I visited the house of a particularly wealthy miser, breached the wall, and laid my hands on cash and valuables. The night was as dark as the stain on Siva's neck, and I was well concealed by my cloak. So I could get away from the house without any difficulty. On the street, however, the dark and cloudy night was suddenly lit up for a moment by something that looked like a flash of lightning but that turned out, on closer observation, to be a girl loaded with lustrous gems. I asked her who she was. Quaking with fear, she told me her story, which was like this.

'I am the daughter of Kuberadatta. My father promised my hand to a wealthy young man of this very city, whose name is Dhanamitra. This young man, however, has no head for business. When his parents died he soon lost all his property through his trusting and simple nature. Now my father refuses to let me marry him and has selected as my future husband a certain Arthapati. This Arthapati is a rich man but I have pledged my torth to Dhanamitra. And, having eluded the servants of the house, I am now going to meet him. Love is my only escort. Please do not obstruct me. Take this treasure and let me go.' With these words she loosened her jewels and gave them to me.

I consoled her as best as I could and offered to escort her to her lover's house. But we had hardly taken a few steps when a torch was directed at us and a group of policemen fell upon us. I did some quick thinking and devised a plan which I whispered to her. Before the guardians of the law

could say a word the girl, acting on my advice, pretended that she had been crying bitterly With a look of terror in her eyes she wailed, 'Kind gentlemen, help me We had just entered this city when my guardian was bitten by a snake. Please get hold of a necromancer and save his life Take pity on a helpless woman ' And she broke into fresh tears, while I simulated poison cramps and writhed as though in great agony

One of the policemen claimed to be a poison specialist He treated me with charms, spells and the like—all without success, since I continued to groan! The self-styled specialist threw up his hands and said, 'I am afraid he is done for It must have been a particularly vicious cobra His limbs are already rigid, and his eyes are glassy There, now his respiration has also ceased ' And then, turning to the girl, the rogue continued, 'Weep your fill, my dear. Tomorrow we shall cremate him But such is life Who can escape the hands of destiny?' With these words he went off along with the others

I heaved a sigh of relief when I saw the last of the policemen Then I conducted the girl to her lover I spoke to him plainly and said, 'Sir, I am a thief I met this lady when she was coming to you, with no other escort but a loving heart Sympathising with her, I have conducted her safely to you These jewels are hers Take them '

The young man was deeply moved and said, 'You have restored my beloved, but stolen my speech, for I do not know how to express myself ' When I asked him about his plans he said, 'Without the consent of her parents I cannot marry her and live here We shall leave the country this very night ' I talked him out of this plan and told him that it was much better to deprive the girl's rich father of his wealth than to sneak away from the city So the three of us went to Kuberadatta's house, which I soon stripped to the bare walls Then I took the lovers to my own house and fed them We had a bath and sank into slumber

In the morning, when the sun lifted its disc like a ruby horn, we rose and wandered in the streets Everywhere

people seemed to talk only of our exploits. I concealed myself outside Kuberadatta's denuded house and overheard what was being said inside Arthapati, the bridegroom-to-be, was consoling the merchant for the loss of his wealth, and at the same time postponing the proposed marriage by a month!

I now hatched a most original plan for Dhanamitra, which he followed to the letter. Advised by me he went to the king's palace with a cooked-up story 'Your Majesty', he said to the king, 'I am Dhanamitra, son of a multi-millionaire. A group of rowdies stripped me of my wealth. As soon as I was deprived of my fortune, the miser Kubera-datta, who had earlier promised me his daughter's hand, promptly went back upon his word. Now my sweet little fiancée is being forced to marry a money-bag called Arthapati. In sheer despair I went to the forest and was about to end my life when a hermit took pity on me and saved me from suicide. He gave me this magic wallet which works only for merchants and courtesans. If it is set down in a hallowed spot and worshipped, it is found to be filled with gold every morning. But there are two conditions. The person who uses it must first restore to the rightful owner anything that he might have unlawfully taken from him. He must also bestow charities on a large scale, and feed the Brahmins. Being a loyal citizen I have come to inform you of my acquisition. I thought I should not use this magical purse without first reporting to Your Majesty.'

The king was very happy at this thoughtfulness on the part of one of his subjects, and said, 'My dear fellow, it is very good of you to have informed me. Go and enjoy your treasure as much as you like.' Dhanamitra said, 'Thank you, Your Majesty. But I hope you will be kind enough to protect my precious wallet against theft.' The king promised his protection and Dhanamitra went home.

He pretended to worship the wallet everyday, and at night secretly filled it with the proceeds of our robbery. In the morning he would exhibit his wealth with great publicity. Very soon the whole city was talking about

Dhanamitra's magic wallet The greedy Kuberadatta now abandoned Arthapati and again started flattering Dhanamitra The hostility between the two suitors was further fanned by my friend Vimardaka who, at my instigation, entered Arthapati's service

One day it was announced that Kamamanjari's younger sister, Ragamanjari, would give a performance of dance and music The élite of the city gathered Accompanied by my friend Dhanamitra I also went there As Ragamanjari commenced her dance on the stage, a second dance began on the stage of my heart Cupid had struck with deadly effect The girl was stunningly beautiful Her glances fettered me When the dance was over she darted a playful look at me and then, with a careless smile, she vanished I somehow managed to scramble back home and flung myself on the bed

Next morning Dhanamitra came to me and said, 'Friend, I have seen what has happened But you must cheer up We shall find some way of securing Ragamanjari's affection for you Meanwhile I have come to know of certain things that will interest you This girl Ragamanjari, though a courtesan, pretends to be virtuous She declares indifference to money and insists that only a gentleman prepared for matrimony may approach her Her relatives are perturbed and even her sister, Kamamanjari, has been making frantic efforts to cure her of this fit of virtue That is how the matter stands at present Her relatives will not consent without money, and she herself will not consent if anyone talks of money Such are the opposites that we have to reconcile' Dhanamitra's words cheered me up because they opened up new prospects I said, 'What is there to reconcile' We shall win over the girl with virtue and secretly satisfy her relatives with money'

I lost no time in getting into touch with Kamamanjari Through the mediation of a certain female ascetic named Dharmarakshita, whose palm I greased liberally, I struck a bargain with the courtesan It was agreed that I should steal from Dhanamitra his magic wallet and give it to her,

and she in her turn should persuade Ragamanjari to be kind to me. The very next day I gave her the magic wallet, pretending to have stolen it. And she permitted Ragamanjari to visit me. The theft of the so-called magic wallet was widely publicised. Everywhere there was speculation about the identity of the thief. I advised Dhanamitra and Vimardaka to stage a mock quarrel. Each of them put his best in his part and the spectators were convinced that Vimardaka, nominally in Arthapati's service, was a sworn enemy of Dhanamitra. And then Vimardaka quietly disappeared from the city.

When all this had been duly stage-managed Dhanamitra went to the king. He loudly bewailed the theft of his wallet and named Arthapati and Vimardaka as suspects. The king, who had promised his protection, promptly sent for Arthapati and asked him whether he knew a man called Vimardaka. The simpleton replied, 'Certainly, Your Majesty. He is a very close friend of mine. What service can he render to you?' The King said, 'In that case will you be good enough to produce him?' Arthapati said he would soon be back with his friend and went home. To his consternation Vimardaka was nowhere to be found. Arthapati searched the city high and low. He visited the various markets and even peeped into gambling dives and courtesans' quarters. But there was no trace of Vimardaka. Arthapati came back to the palace and, confused as he was, made all kinds of self-contradictory statements. Dhanamitra now seized the advantage and said, 'Your Majesty, the thief has escaped, but his employer is still here!' The king was convinced of Arthapati's crime, stripped him of his wealth, and threw him into a dungeon.

Meanwhile Kamamanjari was trying to milk the magic wallet. It had been made known that the wallet would not work unless the possessor restored to the rightful owner any property that might have been acquired from him through cunning and trickery. She, therefore, hunted out Vasupalita, the Jain ascetic, and, begging his forgiveness, restored the fortune that she had squeezed out of him.

The second condition attaching to the wallet was supposed to be that the owner should feed a large number of Brahmans every day and bestow charities on a lavish scale. Kamamanjari, as credulous as she was greedy, fulfilled this condition also. Every day there were feasts at her house and money was distributed to all and sundry. She hoped that the wallet would more than compensate for the vast expenses that she was incurring! Very soon she had practically denuded her house of its valuables.

At my suggestion Dhanamitra went to the king again and said, 'Sir, this Kamamanjari has the reputation of being an extremely covetous girl. And yet she is today throwing away her wealth as though she were the very image of generosity. It seems she has got hold of my magic wallet.' The king saw his point and felt that his suspicions were not groundless. Kamamanjari and her mother were immediately summoned. In a desperate bid to save themselves, they confessed to being in possession of the wallet which, they said, was given to them by Arthapati. The king was now furious and ordered that Arthapati should be condemned to death. Dhanamitra, with a great show of liberality and forgiveness towards his enemy, pleaded, "Your Majesty, do not be so harsh. Although he has treated me outrageously, I do not desire that a member of the merchant class should suffer the extreme penalty. Kindly forgive him. However, you can confiscate the criminal's property and exile him."

The king praised him for his noble intercession on behalf of his rival. Arthapati was reduced to a single rag and banished from the city.

Thus all my objects were attained. I had fulfilled the promise made to the ascetic Vasupalita, his property had been restored to him by Kamamanjari. I had humbled the pride of Kamamanjari herself with no other weapon than a leather wallet worth a few coppers. I had removed from Dhanamitra's path his rival in love so that he could marry the girl of his choice. And I had filled a house with gold and jewels for my own beloved Ragamanjari."

Rajavahana congratulated Apaharavarman on his cleverness and said, "Well, what an excellent professor of theft you would make!" All the companions laughed and there was a good deal of bantering. At Rajavahana's suggestion, Mitragupta then came out with his story, which was like this

The Story of Mitragupta

"Your Majesty, I too started my wanderings with the object of discovering your whereabouts. By and by I reached the city of Damahpta in the Suhma country. In a park outside the city a big fair was being held that day, and curiosity prompted me to go there. While there was great merry-making all around, and festive sounds filled the air, I saw a young man in a lonely bower playing a melancholy note on his lute. I approached him and asked, 'Sir, I am a stranger to this city. Will you tell me what this festival is and why it is celebrated? And, if you will forgive a stranger's interference, will you tell me why you are so depressed, so indifferent to the gaiety that surrounds you?'

The young man said, 'Most kind of you, Sir, to show so much solicitude. I shall give you a gist of the situation. Tungadhanvan, our king, was childless for many years. He prayed to Parvati with so much devotion that a son and a daughter were granted to him. But two conditions were attached. The first was that the daughter must honour Parvati with a dance once every month from her seventh year until the day of her marriage, that while dancing she must play with a ball and the festival must be called the Festival of the Ball. The second condition was that the son must live as a servant of the daughter's husband.

Soon after Parvati had granted his prayer, the king's dear queen Medini gave birth to a son and a daughter who were named Bhmadhanvan and Kandukavati respectively. Now both have grown up and Kandukavati is of marriageable age. Today the city observes the Festival of the Ball. Very soon you will see the princess dancing with the ball.'

The young man relapsed into silence and I asked him, 'I now understand why the festival is being held. But you have still not told me the reason of your dejection. Pray why do you sit here alone, with the lute as your only companion?'

The youth heaved a sigh and said, 'It is love, Sir, that makes me sad. The princess has a cousin, Chandrasena, who is as dear to me as my own life. Chandrasena returns my love, but Prince Bhumadhanvan has started pestering her with his advances. Alas, how can an ordinary person like me contend against a prince?'

He had hardly finished when a tinkle of anklets was heard and a maiden appeared. The young man embraced her fondly and said, 'Dearest Chandrasena, give me one last, lingering look. Soon I shall cease to draw breath. Life has nothing to offer me.'

The girl's face swam in tears as she said, 'My Lord, you must not think of such a desperate deed for my sake. Remember that you are Koshadasa, son of Arthadasa, the most respectable merchant of the city. You must not disgrace your house by suicide. Here I am. Take me away to some other country at this moment.'

At this stage I intervened and told them that I would somehow devise a plan to secure their happy union in that very city. But before I could explain my scheme the princess came that way and the dance was announced. A girl jumped up and said, 'She has come. Attention, worthy citizens. The princess has come. She is about to honour the Goddess Parvati by playing the ball. Satisfy your eyes. The exhibition is public.'

Kandukavati stood on a raised platform when I first saw her. It was a richly decorated stage, with jewels glistening on every column. As the princess stood there her beauty was so magnificent that I immediately lost my heart to her. 'Can this be the Goddess of Beauty?', I asked myself. But what a foolish comparison. The Goddess of Beauty holds a lily in her hand, while Kandukavati's hand was itself a lily.

As I thus reflected, she crossed her hands with faultless

grace and, bending down, touched the earth with her finger-tips. Her black curls fluttered as she bowed before the image of the Goddess. Her hands held the ball as though it were Cupid himself whom she had imprisoned. And then she began to play. She dropped the ball on the ground, and as it slowly rose up struck it with her delicate hand. Her fingers were extended and the thumb bent as she bounced the ball with the back of her hand and caught it in mid-air. Meanwhile her glances flashed around it as honey-bees flicker around a bunch of flowers. She dropped it and picked it up, patted and pounded, and occasionally seemed to soothe and pacify it with gentle touches. With perfect mastery she timed the movements of the ball with her forward and backward steps. She struck now straight and now sideways, now with the left hand and now with the right, as though the ball were a bird flying at her command. And if it soared too high, she chastised it and taught it moderation.

At each sweet movement of her hands a sigh of admiration welled up from the enchanted spectators. I stood there as in a trance, leaning on Koshadasa's shoulder and gazing upon Kandukavati's curving eyebrows as they followed the flight of the ball. Her bright, red lips reflected rays of light made wavy by her breath. As she pursued the circles traced by the ball, she seemed to enclose herself within a cage of flowers. And when she struck out quickly in all directions, it seemed as though Cupid had discharged all his five arrows simultaneously. When her rich hair whirled with her movement, she sent them back to the shoulders with one little toss of her head. With the jingle of her gems and the rustle of the silk that she wore, she seemed to bestow life upon the ball. Now and again her golden ear-ring slipped out but she skilfully readjusted it without the slightest interference in the timing of her steps. She rose and bent down and rose again so quickly that her anklets seemed to appear and vanish and reappear as if by magic. And the pearls, kept always on the move, appeared utterly exhausted. Her exertions brought drops of sweat to her cheeks, but they

were immediately dried because the blossoms which she wore over her ears served as swaying fans

After showing us her skill in a thousand delectable tricks she ended her performance. She flashed at me a glance as deadly as Cupid's lotus-arrow, then repeated a backward turn of her face, sweet like the full moon's disc. Finally, tripping lightly from the stage, she went with her friends towards the palace.

Giddy with love, I went to Koshadasa's house where he lavishly entertained me with all the luxuries of a rich man's establishment. In the evening came Chandrasena. I thought she must be anxious to know if I had evolved some plan for Koshadasa and herself. So I said, 'Don't worry, little one. I know a magic lotion with which you can anoint your eyes. When you approach the prince after applying this lotion, you will look like a monkey to him. He will be cured of his love and stop troubling you.'

But Chandrasena was not impressed. She said, 'Oh, Sir, it is most kind of you. You have offered to give me an animal form, and without rebirth, at that. But enough of this. There is another way. It has not escaped my notice that while Kandukavati was dancing, her eyes were only for you. The love-god holds her a prisoner, and she suffers terribly. I shall reveal the secret to my mother who will convey it to the queen, and the queen in her turn will inform the king. Anxious for their daughter's well-being, they will bestow her hand on you. The goddess has decreed that the prince must live as the servant of his sister's husband. Thus Bhumadhanvan will be completely in your power and, at your command, stop pestering me.'

Early next morning I visited the garden in order to revive memories of Kandukavati's performance. There the prince met me, as though by chance. He was full of courtesy and engaged me in agreeable conversation. He invited me to the palace and provided me with a perfumed bath followed by a gorgeous feast. I did not have the heart to refuse, so earnest and affectionate did his invitation seem. After the banquet I lay down on a richly-brocaded couch. As I

slumbered, dreaming of my beloved princess, the prince ordered his menials to bind me with fetters of iron. I woke up with a start and the insolent prince laughed in my face. 'You thier', he jeered, 'how modest are your aspirations! So, you are to marry the princess? and I, the heir apparent of a mighty king, shall be your servant? And I must not offend you? And I must give away Chandrasena to Koshadasa? What wonderful plans! But you must know that I employ spies to follow Chandrasena wherever she goes. Her chatter was overheard through the lattice and reported to me. So here you are.' With these words he turned to a hireling and bellowed, 'Tie him up and throw him into the ocean.' The hooigan cried, 'Oh yes, noble prince, we shall do it right away.' The fellow looked so happy that it appeared as if someone had bequeathed a kingdom to him.

And so, making a bundle out of me, they tossed me into the sea. There was nothing to which I could cling, and it was with great difficulty that I somehow kept afloat. A long day passed, followed by a night which appeared infinitely longer, and then I was picked up by the crew of a trading ship. They were Greeks and they pulled me out in the hope of making me work as a slave. Presently, my fate took another turn and a galley, accompanied by smaller boats, attacked the ship. The attackers clambered up and in the fight that followed the Greeks were facing defeat. They struck off my fetters when I told them that I was a good fighter. Luck was with me. I struck such terrific blows, and showered my shafts so accurately, that the attacking party soon began to retreat. I engaged their captain in single combat and discovered, to my utter surprise, that he was none other than prince Bhumadhanvan. We were both wondering at this strange turn of events when the crew fell upon him, bound him with my fetters, and treated me as a great hero. After a while we were caught in a hurricane. The ship was driven off its course and we came to a little island. Here we disembarked, being in need of fuel and fresh water.

From the spot where we landed I saw a beautiful mountain

at no great distance Its wooded slopes beckoned to me and I was soon climbing steadily The very rocks seemed to be fragrant Cool rivulets hurried past me, like streams of honey oozing out of blue lilies There were groves laden with blossoms of many colours I was so enchanted by these sights that I hardly realised when I reached the summit Suddenly I came upon a pool that was tinged red Looking deeper, I found that there was a stairway made of rubies leading to the bottom of the pool I had a refreshing bath and satisfied my hunger by chewing a few lotus-stalks, sweet as nectar

As I was about to relax, a hideous ghost emerged from the pool and stood before me 'Who are you?', thundered the ghost, 'Where do you come from?' I replied nonchalantly, 'My dear Sir, I am a Brahmin and I have been travelling I passed from an enemy's hand into the sea, from the sea into a Greek ship, from the Greek ship into a storm and from the storm to this delightful mountain At the moment I am proposing to rest by the side of this pool, and I offer you my greetings'

My courtesy was wasted upon the ghost He continued his threatening manner 'I shall ask you four questions', he said, 'and if you don't answer them, I shall eat you' Without any trace of alarm I replied, 'Very well, ask them', and these were the questions that he asked

What is the extent of a woman's callousness?

How do good wives please us?

Can true love mistake its object?

Can a difficult goal be attained through cleverness?

With perfect confidence I said, 'Why, nothing could be easier You have only to ask Dhumini, Gomini, Nimbavati and Nitambavati They can answer these questions'

The ghost was baffled He had expected me to take a long time over my answers He said, 'And who are these women? Tell me what they did I shall judge whether your stories serve as answers to my questions'

And so I narrated the doings of the four women, while the ghost listened. First I told him the story of Dhumini

The Story of Dhumini

There is a country called Trigarta. Through the displeasure of Indra, there was once a failure of rains in this country for twelve successive years. Crops were destroyed, trees dried up, rivers dwindled. All social pleasures came to an end. Bands of robbers roamed at will. Food became so scarce that pangs of hunger ultimately compelled people to take recourse to cannibalism.

There was in this country a family of three brothers who lived together along with their wives. They were merchants and had accumulated a good deal of wealth. Now, during the years of drought, they lost everything. Their store of grain was consumed. They killed their goats and sheep, their cows and buffalos, until nothing was left in the house that could satisfy their hunger. One by one they proceeded to feed upon their servants and maids. Even the children were not spared. Finally, only the three wives remained. Of these the oldest and the middle wife were disposed of. And then the youngest brother Dhunyaka, unable to bear the thought of killing his young wife, Dhumini, fled with her into a forest. Not only did he save her life but he also gave her whatever food he could get hold of in the forest although he was himself faint with hunger. Indeed, he did not hesitate to satisfy her thirst with his own blood when it became clear that she would otherwise die.

As he entered the deep woods he saw a man writhing under a tree. Approaching, he discovered that the man was a cripple. Robbers had cut off his hands, feet, ears and nose. Moved to pity, Dhunyaka carried the cripple on his shoulders and proceeded. When he was despairing of life he luckily reached a part of the forest where fruits and tubers were in great abundance. There, by the side of a brook, he fashioned with great effort a thatched hut out of leaves and branches. He treated the cripple's wounds and shared with him his own meagre supply of food.

One day Dhunyaka went out on a deer-hunt. Knowing that he would take a long time to return, Dhumini approached the cripple with immodest proposals. The man was shocked and upbraided her, but she threatened him and eventually forced him to comply with her wishes. Late in the evening her husband returned. His exertions had made him thirsty, and he asked for water. Dhumini pretended that she was ill and, giving him the bucket and the rope, asked him to fetch water from the stream. As he was drawing the water, she pushed him violently from behind. The current carried him away and Dhumini felt certain that her husband would be dashed against the rocks and lose his life.

She now put the cripple on her shoulders and wandered from city to city, earning much praise as a devoted wife. Finally, through the favour of the king of Avanti, she settled down in easy circumstances. Many months later she heard that her husband had been rescued by merchants who happened to pass that way, and that he was begging his bread in the streets of Avanti. To cover up her own guilt Dhumini boldly went to the king and said, "Sir, the man who mutilated my dear husband is in this city. You must punish him with death." The king sent his officers to arrest Dhunyaka whom Dhumini identified as a bandit. The king condemned Dhunyaka to be executed.

As he was being led to the place of execution, with his arms bound behind his back, Dhunyaka said, "If the man whom I am supposed to have mutilated is prepared to condemn me, I shall accept that my punishment is perfectly just." The officers thought that this was a very reasonable remark. They summoned the cripple and asked him if the supposed criminal had really mutilated him. The cripple, who was an upright fellow at heart, broke down and wept profusely. He described the charity and generosity which Dhunyaka had displayed, and the shameful behaviour of his wife. The king was enraged when he discovered how he had been imposed upon. He ordered that Dhumini's face should be disfigured and she should be made to work as a

cook for the dogs in the royal kennels Dhunyaka was released and received many favours

And that is why I say that if you want to know how far a woman's callousness can go, Dhummi is the right person to enlighten you

* * *

The ghost was satisfied that his first question had been well answered, and I proceeded to tell him the story of Gomini, which was as follows

The Story of Gomini

In the city of Kanchi there once lived a young man named Shaktikumara, who had just inherited a vast fortune. As he was nearing the age of eighteen he reflected 'I must now find for myself a good and virtuous wife. But how shall I discover a girl who will bring me happiness? It is no use depending upon the recommendations of others. I must make my own choice, even if I have to wander far and wide.'

And so Shaktikumara assumed the garb of a fortune-teller, and roamed from city to city. He carried with him a bundle of paddy, and whenever he met a girl of his own caste said, "Young lady, can you give me a luxurious meal with this measure of rice?" He asked this question in many cities but was always ridiculed and rejected by the parents of the girls whom he approached.

After a long period of wandering he reached the bank of the Kaveri river in the Shibi country. There a marriageable girl was presented to him for consideration by an old nurse. The girl, whose name was Gomini, belonged to a good family. Her parents once possessed a good deal of property but were then in difficult circumstances. As soon as he saw her, Shaktikumara had a feeling that he had met the right girl. He examined her palm and was satisfied with all the marks of fortune. And he was also attracted by her appearance. So he proceeded with his usual test, fervently hoping that she would not disappoint him. He looked at her

affectionately and said, "My dear girl, do you think this measure of rice that I have here can be converted into a satisfying meal?" Gomini undertook the task without hesitation. She signalled to her nurse, who took the grain from the young man's hand. The girl washed her feet and selected a clean, pleasant spot near the door of the house. Then she trampled the paddy, and set it in the sun, turning it over from time to time. When it was perfectly dry she gently struck the paddy with a hollow stalk and extracted the kernels without crushing the husks. Turning to the nurse she said, "Mother, take these husks to the jewellers. They use them to polish gems and will readily buy them from you. With the money that you receive buy some firewood, a small kettle and two saucers."

The old woman did what she was told. The girl took a pestle tipped with iron and pounded the rice in a mortar. Her graceful arm moved up and down, and her tenuous waist bent and straightened, as she skilfully made the grains rise and fall at will. Then she put the rice in a winnowing sieve. When the awns had been removed, she rinsed the rice a number of times and then gently dropped it in water that was about to boil. When the grains had softened and swollen she strained off the scum. Stirring a little at a time, and patting with the ladle, she saw to it that the cooking was even. When this was done she sprinkled water on the faggots that were only scorched but not burnt out. Collecting these charred pieces of wood she gave them to the nurse and said, "Now take these to the retailers and with the money that you get buy a little butter, oil, spices and vegetables."

When these things had been procured, she made a broth, set it in a new saucer and put the saucer in moist sand. She cooled it with a palm-leaf fan and made sure that it was delicately scented by the smoke from the wood-fire. And then she added spices, after carefully grinding them and bringing out their flavour.

The guest was now invited to take his bath. When he had done so, Gomini asked the nurse to set the meal before

him Seated on a raised platform, he savoured with great satisfaction the rice gruel and the broth served to him on greenish-white banana leaves When he had thoroughly enjoyed them, the girl served the remainder of the rice with curds and spices soaked in butter-milk And this was followed by a course of clotted cheese

Shaktikumara smacked his lips as the last morsel melted in his mouth The girl then gave him cool water perfumed with full-blown lotuses She let the water spout from a new pitcher and his ears tingled at the pleasing sound The water satisfied him as though it were nectar from paradise The old nurse cleared the dishes and the young man lay down on the freshly-swept pavement Wrapped in his ragged cloak, he slept the sleep of the blessed

When he woke up he expressed his complete satisfaction and married Gomini with great ceremony Some time after their marriage he began to neglect her and was drawn towards another girl But his wife was so considerate, so devoted to him and so sweet in her ways that he soon repented his waywardness Subjugated by her merits he made over the entire household to her

And that is why I say that the story of Gomini tells us how good wives please the soul

* * *

Then, in answer to the ghost's third question, I narrated the following story

The Story of Nimbavati

It the city of Valabhi there lived a man called Grihagupta He was the captain of a trading ship and fabulously rich Grihagupta had a daughter named Ratnavati whom he loved dearly

A young man called Balabhadra, son of a merchant, came to woo Ratnavati He seemed to be very much in love with her and since he was a suitable groom Grihagupta agreed to the marriage For a while everything went well And then for no apparent reason Balabhadra began to

neglect his wife Gradually he became more and more estranged from her, until he began to avoid his father-in-law's house The relatives and acquaintances of the unhappy girl lost no time in mortifying her with taunts They started calling her Nimbavati, the Bitter-fruit Girl, instead of Ratnavati, the Jewel-Girl

Ratnavati endured her humiliation for a few days and then thought of a plan She approached her foster-mother, an aged hermit woman, and won her sympathy by describing her unhappiness When the old lady promised to help her Ratnavati came out with her plan She said, "Holy mother, if you want to save my life please help me carry out a scheme that I have contrived Next door to us lives a merchant whose daughter Kanakavati is a dear friend of mine. She looks very much like me, and we also closely resemble each other in figure and gait I shall ascend the balcony of her mansion and play with a ball Meanwhile you must somehow manage to bring my husband to her house When you are just below the balcony I shall drop the ball You will catch it and give it to him saying, 'My son, that charming girl is your wife's friend Kanakavati You must restore this ball to her' He will look up and mistake me for my friend I shall bend down and coquettishly beg for the ball Nudged by you, he will return the ball with eagerness You must see to it that this chance acquaintance ripens into love When he is deeply enamoured of me you will persuade him to accept a rendezvous, so that he may elope with me to another city "

The scheme was put through with complete success Balabhadra fell desperately in love with his own wife, taking her to be Kanakavati His wife kept up the illusion by appropriate changes in her dress and jewellery As soon as the two had left the city in the darkness of night, the old woman started telling everyone "Balabhadra confessed to me yesterday that he was ashamed of himself for the way in which he had treated his wife I shall not be surprised if he now takes her away to some other city " Thus the background was prepared, and when the young couple

were found to be missing, it was generally taken for granted that the old woman had spoken the truth. It never occurred to anybody that Balabhadra had disappeared on what he considered to be an elopement. Thus Ratnavati's prestige and reputation were firmly re-established.

Meanwhile Balabhadra journeyed to another town and set up business. After a while he got into trouble with one of his assistants whom he rebuked very harshly for negligence of duty. Now this assistant had managed to guess that his master was living with a respectable merchant's daughter whom he had whisked away from her parents' home. He had gathered this impression from a few chance remarks made by Balabhadra in the course of intimate conversation. The assistant went to the authorities and reported what he thought was a guilty secret. The Town Council was convoked and a serious view was taken of Balabhadra's conduct. It was considered undesirable that a man who had stolen the daughter of a prominent citizen in a neighbouring city should be allowed to flourish. And it was suggested that Balabhadra's entire property should be confiscated.

At this stage Ratnavati intervened. She said to her husband, "Do not be alarmed, my dear. You can tell them that I am not Kanakavati at all but Ratnavati, the daughter of Grihagupta, and that you have been duly married to me. If they want to verify this statement let them send a messenger to Valabhi. I shall see to it that your version is supported at the other end." Balabhadra did what was suggested. Ratnavati sent an urgent message to her father who came and, with great joy, took his daughter and son-in-law with him. Having got out of his predicament through her advice, Balabhadra became all the more devoted to Ratnavati, still imagining her to be Kanakavati.

That is why I say that love may sometimes completely mistake its own object—a fact which will be readily borne out by Ratnavati, who was so cruelly nicknamed Nimbavati.

And finally, in order to answer the ghost's fourth question, I told him the story of Nitambavati. The sequence of events was like this

The Story of Nitambavati

In the prosperous city of Mathura there once lived a young man who had all the advantages of birth and fortune. He came of a rich family, was remarkably handsome and well-versed in all the elegancies of gay society. By his strength of arm he had become a thorn in the side of trouble-makers, who therefore gave him the name of Kantaka, that is to say, 'Thorny'.

One day Kantaka happened to meet an artist who had come from another city. He was carrying a picture of a girl so exquisitely beautiful that the mere sight of it made Kantaka lovesick. He examined the picture closely and, being an experienced man-about-town, made a shrewd guess. "My dear Sir", he said to the artist, "there is something incongruous about your picture. The figure is beautiful, the complexion is clear, the pose is modest. Yet I see from the expression that the girl is not happy. What could be the reason? Her husband is *not* travelling in distant lands, because in that case tradition would have dictated a different hair-style. I believe you have here the portrait of a young girl married to an old and busy husband. All her youthful impulses are being starved."

The artist was impressed by his judgment. "You are perfectly right", he said, "This is the portrait of Nitambavati, wife of Anantakirti. She lives in Ujjaini, the capital of Avanti, and her husband is one of the richest merchants of the city." The young man, who had lost his heart to the lady in the picture, started for Ujjaini. When he reached there, he disguised himself as a beggar, assumed the name of Bhargava, and went to the merchant's house. At the sight of Nitambavati his passion was redoubled and he made up his mind to obtain her at any cost. He somehow managed to secure the position of a watchman in the cemetery. After a while he sent a message to Nitambavati

through a Buddhist nun whom he had won over. The nun came back and declared that Nitambavati would entertain no dishonourable proposals from strangers, as she was an honest woman.

Kantaka now changed his tactics. He sent another message, which ran like this: 'You must know, worthy lady, that I am a seeker after salvation engaged in holy meditation. My earlier message was meant only to test your true nature. I am indeed happy to see that, with all your youth and beauty, you are devoted to your lawful husband. Now I wish to increase your happiness. It is natural that you should want your husband to pay greater attention to you. This can be brought about quite easily. I know a necromancer who is the master of many spells. I shall conduct him to an orchard. You must enter the orchard alone and place your right foot in the necromancer's hand. He will then repeat a magic spell. That very night you must somehow touch your husband with your right foot and very soon you will see the change in him.'

This message completely deceived Nitambavati. She did as she was told. As soon as she placed her foot in the hand of Kantaka, whom she imagined to be a necromancer, he snatched her golden anklet, pricked her thigh with a knife, and hurried away. Cursing her own credulity she returned home and dressed her wound.

Meanwhile the young rogue approached Anantakirti and offered the anklet for sale. "How did you get hold of this, you thief", exclaimed the merchant. "This is my wife's anklet." Kantaka refused to answer, and said that he would speak only in the presence of the merchant-guild. When all the prominent merchants of the city were gathered together Kantaka said, "Gentlemen, as you know I earn my living as a watchman at the graveyard. The other night I saw a dark-eyed lady stealing into the cemetery. I watched her movements closely and was shocked to see that she was a vampire. She had come to satisfy her appetite with half-burnt corpses. I tried to catch her, but she eluded me. However, I managed to grab this anklet from her foot, and

scratched her thigh with my knife "

Since Nitambavati was unable to account for the loss of her anklet or to conceal her wound, Kantaka's story was accepted as true. The citizens unanimously pronounced her to be a witch. Her husband turned her out of the house and she went to the graveyard preparing to kill herself. Kantaka now threw off his mask, revealed his identity, and said, "Forgive me, my dear, for using these means to alienate you from your husband. The fact is that I am madly in love with you. I sent the nun with a message declaring my love, but you repulsed her. I cannot live without you, and that is why I had to stage these unhappy episodes." With these words he fell at her feet and wheedled her in a hundred ways. Nitambavati gradually calmed down. She had lost her husband for ever, and here was a lover, young, handsome and rich, waiting to offer her the happiness that she had always missed. And so at last he won her consent.

That is why I assert that however difficult the goal might be, a clever man can always think of a stratagem to accomplish it, as the story of Nitambavati amply bears out.

* * *

Having listened to these stories, the ghost was entirely satisfied that his four questions had been answered. He complimented me and offered to help me whenever the necessity arose. As luck would have it, his assistance was required within a few moments. We heard strange sounds in the sky and, looking up, found that a giant was dragging a woman with him. I felt helpless not only because the giant was in mid-air but also because I had lost my sword. I called upon my new friend, the ghost, to rescue the woman. The ghost shouted, 'Stop, you scoundrel! Leave the girl alone, you despicable kidnapper!' As the giant refused to take heed, the ghost darted into the sky and engaged him in a furious struggle. The maiden fell from the sky like a bunch of flowers from the Tree of Paradise. I caught her in my outstretched arms and gently laid her down on the

soft sand near the lake Imagine my rapturous surprise when I discovered that she was none other than Princess Kandukavati!

For a while the princess lay dazed through shock and excitement, while the giant and the ghost fought each other with incredible fury, using boulders and uprooted trees as their weapons At last I succeeded in soothing the princess back to calmness With tears of relief and joy in her eyes she said, 'Oh, my dear Lord! At the festival of the ball I fell desperately in love with you at first sight When I heard that my wicked brother Bhimadhanvan had thrown you into the sea, I eluded the palace guards and went into the garden, determined to put an end to my mortal existence There the repulsive monster, whom you have already seen, surprised me The brute made love to me and when I resisted he carried me off God knows what would have happened to me if destiny had not delivered me into your hands'

We descended to the foot of the mountain, cast off the ship's moorings, and embarked The wind favoured us and we reached Damalupta safely We discovered the king and the queen piteously bewailing the loss of their children, while the counsellors were in the last stage of despair Our appearance overwhelmed them as much with surprise as with delight When I related the entire sequence of events, the king congratulated me Princess Kandukavati, already the darling of my heart, now became my bride Bhimadhanvan was commanded to serve me loyally throughout his life At my bidding the once-arrogant prince left Chandrasena alone She was now free to marry Koshadasa

Thus everything ultimately turned out to my advantage And now, beloved Prince, having met you and other comrades, my happiness is complete "

* * *

Prince Rajavahana heartily applauded Mitragupta "Fate has indeed subjected you to strange vicissitudes, my friend", he said "But you have faced them manfully We are all

proud of you " The other comrades, too, expressed their admiration Then the Prince turned to Vishruta and asked him to narrate his adventures

The Story of Vishruta

"Your Majesty, like all my friends I, too, wandered far and wide in the hope of getting some news of you One day as I approached a well in the Vindhya forest I met a small boy who was suffering from intense hunger and thirst He was shaking with fear and moaning piteously When he saw me, he clung to my garment and said, 'Noble Sir, help me An aged man, my only support in life, has fallen into this well Unless you pull him out I shall perish'

I fashioned a rope out of the creepers that grew wild near the well With the help of this rope I managed to pull out the old gentleman I secured some fruit and drew a little water through a hollow bamboo When the two of them had eaten and quenched their thirst, I asked the old man who he was and how he had come to that sorry pass And this is the story that he told me

* * *

In the country of Vidarbha there lived, not long ago, King Punyavarman He was rightly described as the brightest gem of the royal line of Bhoja He was powerful, self-disciplined, truthful He was deaf to illogical advice and his thirst for virtue was insatiable He knew how to recompense loyalty and managed his affairs with great penetration He settled all disputes with wisdom and justice Under him Vidarbha became the envy of all countries

His son Anantavarman, who succeeded him, was a man of quite a different kind He certainly did not lack either strength or intelligence But he did not have the will to exercise either of them He wasted his time and neglected the duties of state One day Vasurakshita, the elder statesman who looked upon him as a son, admonished him in private He said, "I am going to be very outspoken with

you, my son Why are you throwing away all your advantages? You have acquired skill in the arts, you are sensitive to the charm of poetry, your intelligence is keen You have inherited an immense treasure and a fine army Above all, your noble ancestry is itself something that the world has to reckon with Yet, through indifference to the science of politics, your intelligence is becoming dull Even gold has to be purified by fire if it is to shine brightly Even a great king, if he fails to discriminate between friend and foe, profit and loss, allows his enemies to get the better of him He no longer commands respect His people disobey his wishes All proprieties of speech and conduct are cast aside Therefore, my son, abandon your excessive attention to entertainment Master the science of politics, fortify your power and establish your undisputed rule over the earth "

Anantavarman was impressed by this advice When he went to the inner apartments that evening, he mentioned the matter to his queens At that moment Viharabhadra, who had been his boon companion for some time, happened to be present Now this Viharabhadra was a thoroughly undesirable fellow He had a certain skill in music and dance, and his buffoonery could drive the blues away for a while, but he had no scruples He would throw in his lot with scandalmongers, women of doubtful repute and intriguers of every description He would miss no chance of taking bribes even from ministers of state, and derived great pleasure in promoting amorous adventures at the court. This Viharabhadra was scared at the thought that the king might lose interest in dissipation and thus deprive him of his influence So he set about misleading his master and counteracting the good advice given by the elderly counsellor

"Your Majesty", he said, "I knew that some such thing would happen I knew that someone jealous of your happiness would try to load you with impracticable advice Whenever a man acquires power and wealth, he excites envy Professional soul-savers appear from somewhere, put him through a rigid discipline, send him to bed starving

and bruised, and meanwhile grab a good part of his property. They make all kinds of promises. And when the poor man asks how these promises would materialise they say 'There are four sciences fit for kings: philosophy, religion, economics and politics. Of these, the first three are difficult to learn and do not yield quick results. Leave them alone and concentrate on politics. Chanakya has summarised its principles in a few thousands lines of poetry. Learn them by heart, apply them to specific situations, and all that we have promised shall come to you.'

So the poor fellow starts poring over Chanakya's verses. And when he gets through them, what does he achieve? The first thing he acquires is distrust. He begins to suspect everybody—his friends, his loyal servants, even his wife. For cooking his meal he doles out a small quantity of rice after counting every grain, and he orders that the firewood should be weighed accurately. His peace of mind departs for ever, and he begins his day listening to a complete statement of expenses and receipts. He does not know that while he thinks he is effecting great economy, knaves are robbing him of twice the amount by studying the tricks of that very Chanakya.

Accountancy is followed by litigation. All kinds of legal quibbles are discussed till his head aches. Then comes an endless study of military facts. When, at last, he emerges from details of military strategy, he has to plunge headlong into the tiresome business of diplomacy. His counsellors juggle with reports brought by spies and envoys. They excite passions secretly and pretend to pacify them publicly. In this way, with a great show of devotion and resourcefulness, they hold the poor king in subjection. Finally, when he is ready to eat a morsel of food after all these exertions, he is worried about poison!

And how does he spend his nights? Soon after sunset he interviews secret agents and determines in what way assassins and conspirators should be set at work. After this he snatches a few moments to say his prayer! A couple of hours of uneasy sleep, and back to books and business.

Before business has quite ended, there come the messengers. These messengers know how to exaggerate or conceal reports to their advantage. And then arrive those sly fellows, the Brahmans. Anything that you dole out in their ever-outstretched hands is supposed to unlock the gates of heaven, ensure longevity and ward off disasters.

Such are the rewards of studying politics—not a moment of repose by day, not a moment of pleasure by night. Ultimately the man loses control over his own household, though he had set out with the hope of controlling an empire! That is why I am requesting you to give up this dull political research. Follow your instincts and enjoy the pleasures that God has given you.

It is very easy to preach. 'Conquer the senses, study the rules of strategy, ponder over grave issues of peace and war, and avoid pleasure like poison.' But have you ever enquired how the preachers themselves spend their time? You will find that these pious gentlemen squander the salary that they steal from you in the houses of your own servant-girls. As for conquering the senses, we shall not ask about their own private lives!

Therefore, Your Majesty, beware of these uninvited advisers. You are handsome, rich, and in the bloom of youth. Your treasures groan under the weight of gold and diamonds. You have ten thousand elephants and three hundred thousand horses. Why should you bother about studying political science? Life is short, make the most of it. Leave the burden of administration to friends whose backs are specially meant for that purpose."

With these words Viharabhadra completely neutralised the good advice which Vasurakshita had given. Anantavarman began to drain the cup of pleasure even more diligently. When Vasurakshita urged him to take heed, he assented verbally but was not always able to conceal his contempt. The elder statesman grieved for his former ward. He reflected, 'Alas, this young man now regards me as an object of ridicule. He no longer greets me with a smile. He makes no enquiries about my household,

does not confide his plans to me, and even permits others to occupy my seat. The great Chanakya was right. Such is human nature, that we love the sweet-tongued mischief-monger and hate the candid benefactor. Yet what can I do? I cannot abandon him. I have sworn loyalty to his house. On the other hand, by remaining here I shall no longer be of any use. If this state of affairs continues, our kingdom will fall a prey to Vasantabhanu, king of Ashmaka, who knows his political science thoroughly. My only hope is that disasters, which are bound to come, might bring our king to his senses. Meanwhile I can only bridle my tongue and retain myself among the living!’

As if the evil influence of Viharabhadra was not enough, the king soon acquired another friend Chandrapalita, son of Indrapalita, came from the land of Ashmaka and took up residence in the palace. Indrapalita was the adviser of the king of Ashmaka. His son turned out to be a vagabond, and when all efforts to correct him proved futile he was exiled from Ashmaka.

Chandrapalita lost no time in winning over King Anantavarman to his way of thinking. In fact the king was already leading a life of dissipation. Chandrapalita had only to provide him with invidious arguments and justify his intemperate ways. He would build a strong case in favour of gambling, hunting and other pleasures. He would say, “My friend, gambling has great merits, which have been overlooked through sheer prejudice. It promotes magnanimity. It develops a healthy contempt for money—the gambler has the courage to throw away a pile of money as though it were an orange peel. It makes a man impetuous, and without impetuosity there can be no manliness. It compels a person to exercise his intelligence. It provides a fine training in concentration. It demands quick decisions and thus cultivates self-reliance of the highest order. It promotes manual skill, because it is often necessary to do some clever tampering with the dice, the board and other equipment.”

Hunting, too, has been most unjustly condemned by the

puritans It is beneficial for digestion which, in its turn, is the foundation of health It makes roads secure through the removal of ferocious beasts, the hunter is in fact a public benefactor It leads to explorations in untapped regions Through hunting expeditions we can establish comradely relations with forest tribes which can prove useful in an emergency It accustoms us to extremes of cold and heat, and gives us the power to endure thirst and hunger Moreover, the speed which we acquire in running or riding can prove extremely useful in case of defeat!

The fact is that kingly pleasures have been deliberately encouraged since antiquity because of their solid advantages Take the society of beautiful girls, for instance Does it not lead to skill in thought-reading? Does it not improve our taste in clothes and jewelry? Consider, too, that in order to win the affection of the fair sex, one has to develop quickness of wit and self-assurance in conversation We become stylish, amiable, winsome

Or take the case of wine parties By removing inhibitions they promote mutual confidence Many friendships are cemented by the pleasing gurgle of wine when it is poured from the jar into the cup Wine increases our sensitiveness to music and dance It attracts us towards beauty and we become adepts in all the arts of love Moreover, wine contains medical properties that guard us against diseases It lifts us up from melancholy—and just consider what would happen to a kingdom if the king were to be depressed and dejected!"

Anantavarman found these opinions extremely palatable He acted upon them, and his ministers very soon followed his example The officers of state began to make huge profits and the revenues dwindled while expenses multiplied Noble ladies of the land discovered that virtue was neither pleasant nor rewarding They abandoned themselves to passions of the moment and courtiers took advantage of their newly-acquired freedom By and by the kingdom of Vidarbha sank into disorder, insecurity and crime The

weak were left without support and the strong did as they pleased. Stories of plunder, spoliation and violence were heard on every side. Treason raised its ugly head. Greed and fear stalked the land.

The King of Ashmaka watched all these developments. His followers adopted a hundred subtle methods of destroying Anantavarman's army. Disguised as hunters, they related stories of abundant game supposed to be available in far off ravines. When the men of Vidarbha went there, the so-called hunters cut off their path of retreat by setting fire to grasslands. Plotters, well trained in the arts of leading people to their ruin through false temptations, penetrated to every part of the kingdom. They mingled with toughs of the underworld and promoted brawls in every market and at every fair. They egged people on to fight duels and thus destroy themselves. They quietly poured into wells and tanks poisonous herbs that killed slowly. They seduced women of high families and encouraged bitter quarrels among lovers. Provocation, insult, flattery, falsehood—all these weapons were freely used to undermine social stability. Some of these scoundrels went about in the guise of physicians and distributed sickness in the name of medicine.

When the ripe hour arrived, Vasantabhanu, the king of Ashmaka, marched into Vidarbha. He was supported by many allies—warlords and professional chieftains whom Anantavarman had annoyed. The armies of Vidarbha were routed, and the king perished on the field of battle. Vasantabhanu set his own guards over the immense booty and, with great show of generosity, said to his allies: "Gentlemen, divide the spoil in accordance with your exertions in the common struggle. I claim nothing. If any fragment of the treasure is left over, you can allot it to me." The allies soon quarrelled among themselves. When they failed to evolve any agreed principle of division, Vasantabhanu stepped in and grabbed the entire treasure for himself.

In this hour of dark defeat, Vasurakshita somehow

rescued Queen Vasundhara from the palace along with her two children, Bhaskaravarman—whom you see here with me—and his elder sister Manjuvadinī. The aged counsellor could not survive his exertions, but some loyal friends, including myself, conducted the queen and the children to the city of Mahishmati. We had hoped that Mitravarman, the half-brother of King Anantavarman, would look after his sister-in-law.

Alas, we soon discovered that the queen had escaped from one disaster only to fall into another. Mitravarman made advances to her, and when she repulsed him he tried to kill this poor lad. He thought that she was resisting him only to keep her son as a rightful claimant to the throne. The queen called me aside and said, "Naljangha, you have been like a father to me. I entrust this boy to your care. Take him away wherever you think best. As soon as you feel secure, send me a message." I have managed to bring the lad into this forest. He has endured many sufferings. A little while ago, when he was sorely oppressed by thirst, I tried to find water for him and stumbled into this well. I should have perished if providence had not sent you to help me.

* * *

Such was the story of Naljangha. When I made further enquiries concerning Queen Vasundhara, I discovered that she was related to my own father, Sushruta. This unexpected revelation strengthened the affection that I had already developed for the boy. I promised to re-establish the prince in his rightful inheritance and to destroy the usurper Vasantabhanu.

At that very moment a hunter passed that way. He aimed three arrows at a couple of deer but missed on all the three occasions. Snatching the bow and arrows from his hands, I shot with such accuracy that in only two attempts I despatched both the deer. One of these I gave to the hunter as a gift, the other I cooked over a bonfire. My two companions and myself thus obtained a most welcome meal.

The hunter, impressed by my skill, was ready to answer all my questions. I asked him for news from the city of Mahishmati. He said, "I left the city only this morning after selling off some tiger-skins. There is hot news. Chandrarman's younger brother, Prachandavarman, is coming to make a proposal to Manjuvadinī, the daughter of the late King Anantavarman of Vidarbha. The wedding is expected to come off very soon. The city is in holiday mood."

When the hunter left, I whispered to Naliyanga, "I hope you have understood the game. That knave Mitrarvarman is trying to win the mother's confidence by showing solicitude towards the daughter. He hopes that the news of Manjuvadinī's wedding will draw her brother back to the city where he would be able to kill the poor boy. Now this is what you must do. Send a secret message to the queen assuring her of the boy's welfare and telling her about me. At the same time you must spread the rumour that the prince has been devoured by a tiger. Mitrarvarman will be delighted. He will undoubtedly shed many crocodile tears."

The queen should send him a message, saying 'I should not have opposed your advances. I am now ready to receive you, and I shall do as you desire.' When Mitrarvarman arrives, she should place around his neck a garland dipped in poisoned water, and repeat a spell that I shall tell you. She should herself wear a similar garland, taking care to drop in the water the antidote that I shall provide. When the citizens see that Mitrarvarman dies and Queen Vasundhara survives they will hail her as a faithful wife, and her prestige will be firmly established. After this she must send a message to Prachandavarman, saying 'This kingdom needs a leader. Come and rule over us. My daughter shall be honoured if you accept her as your wife.' Meanwhile, the boy and myself shall live outside the city disguised as ascetics.

Before Prachandavarman arrives, the queen should summon all the distinguished citizens and say 'Gentlemen, the Goddess of the Vindhya forest visited me last night. Through her gracious power I had a wonderful vision. I have looked into the future. Within four days Prachanda-

varman will die On the following day a Brahmin youth will emerge from the shrine of the Goddess along with my son Bhaskaravarman The Brahmin will guard this kingdom and place my son upon the throne of Vidarbha You have all heard that Bhaskaravarman was eaten up by a tiger Actually the Goddess had assumed the tiger's form and taken the boy under her protection My daughter Manjuvadinī shall be the fortunate bride of the Brahmin youth All this will come to pass, but let this be a secret between us ' Such is my scheme If we carry it out carefully, I am sure success will be ours "

Queen Vasundhara did as she was advised, and everything worked out as planned Mitravarman died through contact with the poisoned garland People whispered "Such is the power of a faithful wife! The mere touch of a garland killed Mitravarman But nothing happened to the queen herself, although both garlands were exactly alike " Queen Vasundhara now had the populace entirely on her side

Bhaskaravarman and myself took up residence on the outskirts of the city After nightfall we visited the queen Imagine her joy when she set eyes on her son! She was full of gratitude, and asked Manjuvadinī to bow to me As soon as I looked at her I fell in love with the princess

On the following day Prachandvarman arrived He chuckled at the thought that the kingdom of Mahishmati had fallen into his hands like a ripe fruit In the royal reception hall courtiers were fawning upon him Entertainers of every description were performing before him This, I thought, was a fine chance for me I assumed the garb of a professional entertainer and went into the hall I danced about, waved my hands, and fooled about until every one was amused Then, snatching a knife from the nearest courtier, I exhibited a number of tricks—you might call it a complicated knife-dance Finally, I seized my chance and hurled the knife at Prachandavarman The weapon struck its mark and the usurper lay dead A mercenary chased me but I jumped over his shoulders and at one bound was on the other side of the wall

Assuming my earlier garb of an ascetic, I joined the prince near the shrine of the Goddess. There we set to work devising a place of concealment for ourselves at the very base of the statue. Carefully removing a few slabs, we made an opening so that we could hide ourselves whenever the occasion demanded. Meanwhile the Queen performed the last rites of Prachandavarman and gave out that he was assassinated by one of the agents of Vasantabhanu, the King of Ashmaka.

Early next morning the queen came to the shrine, accompanied by a number of respectable citizens and ministers. The prince and myself, attired in silken garments, lay hidden under the statue. The queen, as advised by Naljangha, took her companions round the innermost section of the shrine, so that they might see for themselves that there was no one in the temple. Then a drum was beaten at a distance, as previously arranged.

At this signal I removed one of the slabs that I had shaken loose and emerged from the recess. The prince followed me. I skilfully moved the statue, flung open the door, and faced the visitors. They all fell flat and were utterly overwhelmed. In a solemn tone I addressed them in these words: 'The Goddess of the Vindhya forest sends you this message through my lips. She took the form of a tigress to conceal this worthy prince. Today she sends me to restore the boy to you. You are to consider me his protector and help me defeat the king of Ashmaka, whose inequities in Vidarbha are passing all bounds. As my reward for fulfilling this task, the holy Goddess has graciously granted that the prince's sister should be given to me in marriage.'

All the people assembled there shouted with delight. They hailed the dynasty of Bhoja and promised to help me. The queen was in a state of boundless joy. That very day I married Manjuvadinī with great ceremony.

I carefully plugged the breach under the statue so that the secret might never be revealed. Very soon the people of Mahishmati began to treat me virtually as a God. My word became law. I sent Naljangha to meet Aryaketu,

who was the oldest and the most experienced counsellor in the kingdom. His prestige was very great, and Mitravarman's downfall dated from the time when he started disregarding Aryaketu's advice. Fortunately for me, Aryaketu proved very friendly to my cause. He sent his blessings through Nalijangha. This strengthened my position still further.

I selected truthful, incorruptible advisers and with their help established order and prosperity in the realm. I rewarded piety, publicly praised generosity, determined the duties of different sections, honoured the learned and made a clean sweep of all who were untrustworthy. I saw to it that the treasury was always kept replenished, since nothing can be more fatal to a government than a shaky exchequer. All the principles of political science that we had learnt together now proved their value to me. Within a short time a vast army and a contented people were behind me.

The time had come to attain my last objective. Vasantabhanu had firmly entrenched himself in Vidarbha. I determined to dislodge him and restore the kingdom to Bhaskaravarman. Rumours of my wonderful deeds had already reached Vidarbha. People had also heard that Bhaskaravarman was under the protection of the Goddess herself. The morale of Vasantabhanu's army was on the decline. I sent spies and other reliable agents who mingled with the citizens of Vidarbha and praised me to the skies. I also sent secret messages to important courtiers warning them of dire consequences should they assist Vasantabhanu in the war that was to come.

Vasantabhanu was too experienced not to have noticed that events were heading towards a crisis. He thought that before dissensions weakened his army altogether, he should start a war. So he invaded Mahishmati. We accepted the challenge. The prince led our forces while I mounted a horse and supervised the deployment of different columns. In the thick of the battle I singled out Vasantabhanu and challenged him to single combat. He aimed a terrific blow at me but I ducked and, countering him with great assurance, struck him dead. All his followers dismounted

and swore allegiance to the prince I re-established order, rewarded loyal generals and promoted capable men to high offices. Then I proceeded to Vidarbha, where a magnificent coronation was held and Bhaskaravarman was duly installed on the throne of his forefathers.

After a while I felt very restless. All my successes and preoccupations had not diminished my longing to find you. So one day I approached Bhaskaravarman and his mother Vasundhara, and said, 'I must go and fulfil an important task. Unless it is performed I cannot find peace of mind. Let Manjuvadinī remain with you while I wander about for a few days. I am seeking some one whom I love deeply—a comrade with whom I have shared all the joys and sorrows of my childhood. I must find him.'

Bhaskaravarman was deeply moved at the prospect of my departure. He tried to detain me and said that the kingdom could not afford to remain without my guidance even for a brief period. But I reassured him. I persuaded Aryaketu to take charge of important affairs in my absence and, bidding farewell to my beloved Manjuvadinī, I resumed my wanderings. I roamed about for many days, not neglecting any clue, however remote. And now that I have met you, my journey has come to an end."

* * *

While the princes were thus narrating their adventures and escapades in distant lands, a letter came from Rajavahana's father. This is what King Rajahansa had written: 'My beloved son, we send you our blessings from Magadha. A few days after you bade us a dutiful farewell and set out on your journey, the report of your disappearance reached us. When months passed and still there was no news of you, your mother and myself were plunged into unbearable sorrow. Indeed, we were preparing to depart from our lives. But the sage, Vamadeva, dissuaded us. "Do not despair, Oh King", he said. "Rajavahana and his comrades, through the contrivance of fate and through their own matchless valour, shall complete the conquest

of the earth's quarters After sixteen years they will return to you, covered with glory and renown " The holy man's words have sustained us all these years Now the sage has revealed to us that you are all assembled at Champa, hence this despatch to summon you My son, hurry home If you delay a moment more, you will hear that the lives of your mother, Vasumatī, and myself, are but a remembered tale '

The heroes assigned adequate forces to guard the conquered kingdoms and appointed competent men to important offices Then they, along with their wives, journeyed to Magadha Having reached the city they loved so much, they respectfully greeted King Rajahansa and Queen Vasumatī The sage, Vamadeva, blessed them and, in the presence of the king, said to them, "Well done, my sons Now go back to your respective kingdoms and rule in righteousness When you feel homesick, come and visit us "

But King Rajahansa, addressing the sage with great deference, said, "Sir, through your grace I have attained surpassing bliss It now befits me and my wife to live like hermits in a forest, strangers to bustle and luxury Please instal Rajavahana as king of the combined kingdoms of Avanti and Malava Let the other heroes live in amity with each other, all obeying Rajavahana and administering their territories with wisdom And let them all enjoy this fair earth which has the four oceans for its mighty girdle "

Rjavahana pleaded with his father not to give up the throne But after a while Vamadeva again intervened "My son", he said, "your father is right It does him credit that he should desire to tread the path appropriate to his years In my hermitage he will find peace and comfort Please do not press him further Moreover—if the truth be told—you will not always be happy in your father's house " They bowed to the sage's advice Rajavahana was established in Magadha and his nine comrades governed their respective kingdoms, coming and going at will to renew the ties of friendship and love And they all tasted such kingly joys as the gods themselves behold with envy

Kathasaritsagara

OR

The Ocean of Stories

SOMADEVA

Eleventh Century A D

SOMADEVA lived in Kashmir in the latter half of the eleventh century. He tells us that, when he wrote the stories of Kathasaritsagara, Kashmir was governed by King Ananta, "whose footstool was like a touchstone for testing the worth of the jewels in the crowns of all the monarchs who bowed before him." He extols the beauty and generosity of Ananta's wife, Suryamati. Disclaiming all originality, Somadeva describes his work as merely the distilled essence of the Brihatkatha, or the 'Great Tale', said to have been composed by Gṛnadhya. "In order to divert, if only for a short while, the mind of that gracious queen, Suryamati, this summary of the Brihatkatha has been written by Soma, the son of Rama, a worthy and virtuous Brahmin."

It was a confused, contradictory age, particularly for Kashmir. Great achievements in poetry, architecture and even philosophy went hand in hand with political disintegration and intellectual debasement. The air was thick with intrigues. Somadeva was himself a witness to tragic events at the court—conspiracy, usurpation, suicide and bloodshed. Old ideals were crumbling. All kinds of esoteric cults had emerged, dragg-

ing the human mind into superstition and unreason. These contradictions are clearly reflected in Kathasaritsagara. We find here much that is tender and elevating, but we also come upon the ruthless and depressing side of life.

The most striking quality of the 'Ocean of Stories' is its stupendous range. It is unquestionably the largest single collection of stories in the world, being twice as big as the Iliad and the Odyssey put together. The title of the work is no idle boast. The Kathasaritsagara is indeed a mighty ocean, uniting in itself all the rivers of myth, mystery, fact, fancy, legend, tradition and romance that had 'flowed' in India since times immemorial.

The comparison is apt from another point of view. Rivers begin as tiny streams. The further they move from their source, the more they swell. Likewise, stories that have been told and retold for centuries no longer remain episodic. They grow, their course becomes wide, they become powerful forces of cultural transmission. They irrigate vast tracts of the human consciousness. In Somadeva's great classic it is not the tiny streams but these mighty currents that have been gathered together.

But perhaps we can vary the metaphor and describe the 'Ocean of Stories' as a vast picture-gallery in which men and women are depicted filling a variety of roles in the drama of life. Some of them face unusual situations and cross into the magic realm of the supernatural. Others find adventure through more normal channels. Still others live out their lives swayed by the longings, passions, hopes and disappointments that are the common lot of all men. And the marvel is that in spite of this endless diversity of character and situation, in spite of the gigantic scale on which the entire work is conceived, the aesthetic unity is never seriously disturbed.

King Brahmadata and the Golden Swans

No other city on earth has attained such imperishable renown as Varanasi which, like the body of Siva, is adorned by the holy Ganga. The flags of its myriad temples sway in the wind and seem to beckon to men, saying 'Come, attain salvation here!'

In this great city of Varanasi there once ruled a king named Brahmadata—a patron of learned men, full of generosity and compassion, of dauntless courage, and wholly devoted to Siva. His commands were obeyed everywhere. They suffered no barriers of sea or mountain. In every continent his word was law.

King Brahmadata had a queen, Somaprabha, who was dear to him as the lotus is to the sun. And he had a Brahmin minister named Sivabhuti who had fathomed the meaning of the scriptures and whose intellect was unsurpassed in brilliance and acumen. Thus King Brahmadata, enjoying the love of his beautiful queen, and profiting by the counsel of his loyal minister, spent his days happily.

Once, as the king was lying on his terrace in the moonlight, he saw two swans flying close by. Their bodies were of gleaming gold, and they looked like fresh lotuses in the heavenly Ganga. The king gazed upon them with admiring eyes, and when they faded into the distance he became exceedingly sad. Sleep eluded him. He longed for a repetition of the sight.

Next morning he sent for his minister and, after describing what he had seen, said, "My friend, it has become absolutely necessary for me to feast my eyes once again upon those golden swans. If I cannot do so, neither my kingdom nor my life has any worth in my estimate. Muster all your resourcefulness and see that my heart's desire is fulfilled."

Sivabhuti said, "Sir, do not be anxious. I have thought of a plan already. Providence has ordained that every living species should find pleasure in particular types of food, drink and dwelling-place. Swans are no exception. Let us construct a pleasant artificial lake, covered with various kinds of lotuses, and let suitable food be scattered on the banks of this lake. Very soon we shall tempt the golden swans into your presence."

Acting on the minister's advice, the king had a delightful pool built outside the city. Within a few days the guards came and informed him that the pair of golden swans had arrived and made themselves at home on a clump of lotuses. The king hastened to the pool and great was his delight as he saw those lovely birds. He admired them from a distance and looked to their comfort. Large quantities of rice, dipped in milk, were scattered on the banks, and the guards were ordered to take every precaution so that no one might molest the swans. The king spent most of his time watching them. Their bodies were golden like the setting sun, their eyes bright like pearls, their beaks and feet were coral-red, and the tips of their wings were emerald-green.

One day, as the king was strolling by the lakeside, he saw a place where an offering of fresh flowers had been made. As there was no shrine in the vicinity, he was surprised and asked the guards about it. One of the guards said, "Your Majesty, thrice every day—at dawn, noon and sunset—these golden swans bathe in the lake and, having purified themselves, make an offering of flowers. Then they stand devoutly, as though absorbed in meditation. Such a wonder has never been seen or heard of."

The king was amazed at this report. So great was his curiosity that he decided to perform severe penance in

order to know the truth about these swans. So he gave up food and water, and worshipped Siva with all his heart. After the king had fasted for twelve days the two heavenly swans came to him in a dream and said, "Arise, noble King! We are touched by your eagerness to know our story. Tomorrow morning, after you have broken your fast, we shall reveal the truth."

So early next morning the king, the queen and the minister sat in a pleasure pavilion near the pool and, having partaken of food, awaited the swans. The birds kept their promise and related their history.

And this is what they said

* * *

The whole world knows about Mount Mandara, the monarch of all mountains. In its gleaming groves all the gods and goddesses of heaven roam for pleasure. On its slopes, irrigated with nectar, there are flowers and fruits that are antidotes to old age and death. Its highest peak, abounding in precious gems, serves as Siva's pleasure-ground. Indeed, he loves it even more than Kailasa.

On this glorious Mount Mandara, Siva one day left Parvati and went away on some business of the gods. Then gentle Parvati, lonely in his absence, wandered from spot to spot recalling pleasant memories. She felt sad, and all the other gods tried to console her.

When spring arrived, Parvati was all the more afflicted by her separation from Siva. One day she was sitting pensively under a tree, thinking about her beloved Lord. Her servants were near her, waiting to fulfil her wishes instantly. Now among these attendants there was a young maiden called Chandralekha who was waving a fan over Parvati's head. As her shapely arm moved gracefully from left to right, her maidenly charm attracted another attendant, Manipushpesvara. He was a match for her in youth and beauty. As he stood by her side, and his glance told her that he was smitten by her loveliness, Chandralekha responded with a tender expression in

Two other servants, Pingesvara and Guhesvara, saw what had happened. They exchanged glances, and a smile passed over their lips. When Parvati saw them smiling, she was offended. She turned round and saw that Chandralekha and Manipushpesvara were looking at each other with unconcealed passion. Distracted as she was with the sorrow of separation, the goddess became angry. She thought that her servants had been guilty of unseemly conduct in her presence. She exclaimed in a tone of impatience, "So, when their master is away these young people make love to each other! And these other two amuse themselves by watching their faces! Very well, let these two lovers, blinded with passion, fall into a human birth. They shall be man and wife. But these impudent watchers shall endure many miseries. They shall live as poor Brahmans, than as *Rakshasas*, then *Pisachas*, and then as *Chandalas*. After that they shall be born among robbers, and then they shall pass through animal existences. They shall become dogs, and then birds. That will teach them to laugh in my presence!"

All her attendants were horrified at the severity of this curse. One of them, Dhurjata by name, said, "Mighty Goddess, you are being extremely unjust. These poor servants do not deserve such dire punishment for such a small offence." At this Parvati uttered another curse and ordained that Dhurjata, too, should be born as a mortal.

After a while, when her anger was somewhat pacified, Chandralekha's mother clung to her feet and implored her to soften the curse. Parvati relented and said, "Well, perhaps you are right. It was through ignorance that these wretches behaved in this way. When all these, having obtained insight, shall in course of time gather together they shall return to our court. You may also rest assured that Chandralekha and her beloved, and also the well-meaning Dhurjata, shall lead happy lives as mortals. But as for the two who laughed in my presence, I insist that they shall be miserable." As soon as Parvati ceased speaking, the five attendants descended to earth.

Now listen to the history of Pingesvara and Guhesvara

* * *

In the village of Yajnashtala there lived a rich and virtuous Brahmin named Yajnasoma. Somewhat late in life two sons were born to him. The elder was named Harisoma and the younger Devasoma. Their childhood was spent happily enough, and they were duly invested with the sacred thread. But after that they fell on dark days. The Brahmin lost all his wealth and soon departed from life. His wife did not long survive him. The two orphans were left without subsistence. Relatives soon deprived them of whatever was left, and they were reduced to living on alms. So they decided to take shelter with their maternal grandfather who lived in another village.

They proceeded by slow stages, begging their way, but when they reached the village they discovered that their grandfather and grandmother were also dead. Tired after their journey, and covered with dust from head to foot, they somehow located the house of their maternal uncles, Yajnadeva and Kratudeva. These two Brahmins welcomed them and gave them food and clothing. But in course of time their wealth, too, dwindled through a series of misfortunes. They had to dismiss their servants and cut down their establishment.

One day, when their income ceased almost entirely, they said to their nephews, "Dear boys, our condition is known to you. We can no longer keep a man to look after our cattle. So you will have to help us."

Harisoma and Devasoma took up the work assigned to them. Every morning they took the cattle to the forest, looked after them all day, and in the evening returned home utterly exhausted. They were, after all, small boys. Sometimes they would fall asleep and animals would be stolen or dragged away by tigers. One day a cow and a goat intended for a religious sacrifice disappeared. Weighed down with shame and fear, the boys brought the other animals home before the usual time and returned to the jungle in search

of the missing cow and goat. In a remote part of the forest they discovered the goat, half eaten by a tiger. Long did they lament, and ultimately decided not to return home. They thought, 'This goat was meant for a holy sacrifice. If we tell our uncles that it has been devoured by a tiger they will be angry. Let us wander off to some other village and somehow support ourselves by begging. Meanwhile let us satisfy our hunger tonight by cooking whatever is left of this goat.'

As they proceeded to roast the goat, their uncles arrived. They were furious when they saw the two boys sitting around a fire on which portions of the goat were being cooked. The boys were terrified and, without giving any explanation, fled from the spot. The two uncles thundered at them, "Ungrateful wretches, is this how you repay us for our hospitality? In your longing for flesh you have done something which is worthy only of *Rakshasas*. We curse you 'May you become flesh-eating *Rakshasas*'."

As soon as the curse was pronounced Harisoma and Devasoma were transformed into *Rakshasas*, with formidable jaws and flaming hair. They also acquired a prodigious appetite, and they roamed the forest, catching and eating animals. One day they rushed upon an ascetic who possessed supernatural power. The ascetic, in self-defence, cursed them. As a result of this curse they became *Pisachas*. In their condition as *Pisachas* they once tried to carry off a cow that belonged to a holy Brahmin. They were overpowered by the Brahmin's spells and were reborn as *Chandalas*.

One day, tormented with hunger, they were roaming about in the countryside and happened to enter a village of bandits. The village guards, taking them for thieves, arrested them and cut off their ears and noses. They were bound with stout ropes, belaboured with sticks, and hauled up before the chief of the bandits. When they related their history the chief was moved to pity and said, "Remain with us. We shall supply you with food. You have arrived here on the eighth day of the month—the day on which we worship Kartikeya. You are our guests. You shall share in

our feast " And so the two *Chandalas* stayed on in the village By and by the bandits took a fancy to them They displayed great courage during raids and eventually became the chiefs of the gang

Many days later they raided a large town which was a favourite abode of Siva himself Evil omens were ignored and they plundered the holy city, including the temple of Siva The inhabitants prayed for protection and the mighty God bewildered the bandits by depriving them of sight The citizens realised that it was Siva who had made their enemies blind The chiefs were captured and beaten, while many of the followers were put to death

The two chiefs were about to be killed when they were miraculously transformed into dogs In this condition they suddenly remembered their former birth, and their delusion vanished In order to put an end to their curse they fasted and tried to pacify Siva by severe asceticism The citizens who came to worship at the shrine offered them food but the creatures would not touch it The two dogs remained in this condition for a long time, and then the attendants of Siva on holy Kailasa implored their master to take pity on their two former companions They said, "Mercy, Oh greatest of Gods! Your former servants, Pingesvara and Guhesvara, who were cursed by the Goddess in a moment of anger, have suffered great miseries for a long time Please take pity on them " Siva ordained that they should be delivered from their canine condition and become crows So Pingesvara and Guhesvara were transformed into crows They broke their fast on the grains of rice that lay scattered on the temple floor And they continued their devotion to Siva

After some time they became vultures, and then peacocks And finally the two were born as swans In this condition they showed even greater devotion to Siva They gained Siva's favour by bathing in sacred pools and by many acts of worship Their bodies became golden and they attained supernatural insight

King Brahmadata, Queen Somaprabha and the counsellor Sivabhuti had listened to the swans with silent reverence. When their narrative ended, the king paid homage to them. But as he was about to say something the swans cut him short and said, "Oh King, you must know that we ourselves are those two attendants of Siva who, having endured a succession of miseries through Parvati's curse, have now become swans and are speaking to you at this moment. And you must know that Manipushpavara, who fell in love with Chandralekha when she was waving a fan over Parvati's head, has become a king upon this mortal earth, and that king is none other than yourself, Brahmadata. Further, Chandralekha has been born as a queen, and she is none other than your own wife, Somaprabha. Finally, we must tell you that Dhuryata, who tried to intercede on our behalf and earned Parvati's anger, has been born as your minister, Shivabhuti, who is with us just now.

You will now understand why we, having already attained insight, and remembering the promised end of Parvati's curse, appeared to you in a dream. We have now all been reunited here and all three of you will soon attain perfection of insight."

As soon as the swans stopped speaking, King Brahmadata, his wife, and his minister all attained supernatural knowledge. They also immediately acquired the power of flying through the air. Accompanied by the two golden swans, they flew to Siddhisvara on the Tridasha mountain, and prayed to Siva. They laid aside the bodies into which they had entered and were reinstated in their former position as servants of Siva and Parvati.

And Parvati, being in a cheerful mood, welcomed them with words of tenderness and affection.

How Madanasena Kept Her Promise

When Virabahu was the King of Anangapura, there lived in that city a prosperous merchant named Arthadatta. He had two children—a son named Dhanadatta, and a daughter, a veritable pearl among maidens, who was called Madanasena.

One day as Madanasena was playing with her companions in a garden, a young man named Dharmadatta saw her. As soon as he set eyes on her he was robbed of his senses. Cupid seemed to have showered upon him all his flowery arrows. When Madanasena left the garden, Dharmadatta was immersed in the gloom of separation. The setting sun seemed to be inflamed with the fire of grief at Madanasena's departure. And the moon slowly mounted upwards, having made sure that his rival in beauty was no longer outside her room.

Dharmadatta went home and tossed in his bed. He was restless. Sleep refused his eager invitations. His friends and relations questioned him about the cause of his dejection, but he kept silent. In the morning he went to the garden once again and saw Madanasena sitting under a tree. As she was alone, he went up to her and declared his love in words surcharged with passion. She replied that she had been betrothed to another. "My father has announced my engagement to the merchant Samudragupta", she said. "I shall be married in a few days, and cannot now be yours even if I had loved you. Please leave me and let no one see you."

But Dharmadatta was like one in delirium. "Happen what may", he said, "I cannot live without you." His passion frightened her. Since they were together in a secluded part of the garden she feared that he might do something rash. So, in order to get rid of him for the time being, she said, "Let my marriage be celebrated first. And then I

shall visit you, for your devotion has won me over "

But how can a man in love endure the thought that his beloved should visit him only after being embraced by another? Dharmadatta said, "You have promised to visit me, and I shall hold you to it. But you must come before you live with your husband. How can a bee take delight in a lotus on which another bee has settled?"

Madanasena was rash enough to give this further assurance as well. Then he let her go and she returned home in great agitation.

The auspicious day arrived. The wedding was celebrated. Madanasena went to her husband's house and spent the day in great merriment. But when evening came she would not respond to her husband's advances. When he began to coax her she burst into tears. The husband, being a man of great sympathy, said, "Fair one, if you do not love me, I don't want you. Go to the man of your choice, whoever he may be."

With downcast eyes Madanasena said, "I love you more than my own life. But I am caught up in a terrible situation. Promise not to be angry and I shall tell you." Her husband promised to listen patiently and she told him what had happened in the garden. "I must keep my word", she continued, "I have not transgressed the law of truth even as a child. Will you ask me to do so now? Let me pay a visit to that young man. When I return to you my mind will be at ease, as I shall have kept my promise. And please do not doubt my great love for you."

These words hit Samudradatta like a thunderbolt. The idea that his wife should visit another man on the very day of his marriage oppressed him sorely. But he permitted her to go.

The moon ascended the great eastern mountain as if it were the roof of a palace. The Nymph of the East smiled, as though touched by the moon's fingers. The Spirit of Darkness was still embracing the shrubs in the forest. At this time, while Madanasena was going alone at night, a thief surprised her. "Who are you and where are you

going?", he asked, seizing her by the hem of her garment

Madanasena was terrified. But, somehow overcoming her agitation, she said, "What is that to you? Let me go. I have to meet someone for an urgent reason."

"Let you go!", the thief exclaimed, "Don't you see that I am a thief?"

"Very well, then. Take my jewels and leave me alone."

"What shall I do with these ornaments? I shall not surrender you, the ornament of the earth. Your face is like the moonstone. Your feet are like rubies, and your limbs are more precious than gold and diamonds."

Madanasena now took the thief into her confidence and narrated her story. "Let me keep my word", she pleaded, "After visiting Dharmadatta I shall return to you. Believe me, I shall not break my promise. Remain here till I fulfil my commitment."

She spoke these words with such earnestness that the thief actually believed her. So he allowed her to go, and remained at that spot awaiting her.

Madanasena went to Dharmadatta who had, in the meanwhile, begun to feel ashamed of his blind passion for another man's wife. When he saw her coming to the forest all alone by night, he felt all the more guilty. "I am touched by your faithfulness to your promise", he said, "You are the wife of another, and I have no claims upon you. Please forgive me and go back to your husband's house."

Having kept her word with Dharmadatta, she returned to the place where the thief was waiting for her. "What happened?", he asked, "Did you keep your tryst?" Madanasena told him exactly what had taken place.

It was now the thief's turn to be struck with wonder and admiration for her courage. "It is true that I am a thief", he said. "But I am also a human being. Your truthfulness has touched my heart. I do not want either your ornaments or yourself. Go home. May you be happy with your husband."

Madanasena returned to her husband's home and told him how she had kept her word and also preserved her honour. Samudragupta, convinced that his extraordinary

wife would not have hesitated to tell the truth even if she had lost her chastity, believed her. He welcomed her to his arms with great affection.

And so Madanasena, having kept two rash promises, began to live happily with her considerate husband.

Sundarasena and Mandaravati

IN the country of Nishadha there is a famous city named Alaka. Since ancient times it has been known for the wealth of its inhabitants and the grandeur of its buildings. In this city of Alaka there once ruled King Mahasena. The name of his chief queen was Shashiprabha, and she bore him a son whom they called Sundarasena.

The prince grew up into a brilliant and courageous youth. He mastered all the arts of war and peace. The citizens doted upon him. Fortunately he had five companions, all of noble birth and all his equals in courage and resourcefulness. The names of these friends were Chandaprabha, Bhumabhujā, Vyaghraparakrama, Vikramashakti and Driḍhabuddhi.

One day the prince, accompanied by his five companions, went out on a hunting expedition. On the outskirts of the city he was greeted by a female mendicant named Katyayani. She hailed him and offered her blessings, but the prince was so much engrossed in conversation that he did not hear her. Katyayani was annoyed. She approached Sundarasena and said, "Are you too great even to accept my blessings? Don't you know that I, Katyayani, receive the respectful attention of every monarch on earth? If you are so proud now, what will happen to you if you obtain a wife like Mandaravati? I suppose you will not listen to even Siva or Indra."

Sundarasena apologized to the ascetic and touched her feet. He said, "Revered mother, please forgive me. I was

absent-minded. Indeed, who has not heard of you? But tell me, who is this Mandaravati that you mentioned?"

Katyayani was mollified. She smiled and said, "Young man, this Mandaravati is every whit your match in beauty. She is the daughter of King Mandaradeva of Hamsadvipa, who is convinced that there is no prince in the entire world worthy to become his son-in-law. In the course of my wanderings I once visited Hamsadvipa and saw the princess. She is like another moon composed entirely of nectar. But why should I waste words? Here is her picture which I drew when I saw her." With these words she opened her bag and unrolled a piece of canvas. As soon as Sundarasena saw the portrait he was pierced by Cupid's flowery arrow. He was wrapt in admiration, and, watching that picture, he himself became motionless like one painted on a canvas.

One of Sundarasena's friends, sceptical of the mendicant's skill, said, "Mother, will you kindly paint a picture of our friend, the Prince?" Katyayani immediately complied with the request. She pulled out another piece of canvas from her bag and within a few moments drew a wonderful likeness of Sundarasena. All the friends were now convinced that Princess Mandaravati must indeed be as lovely as her picture.

When the prince returned home he entered the inner chamber clasping the picture of Mandaravati. He had fallen desperately in love. "Can it indeed be the face of a girl?", he mused. "Or is it merely a picture of the moon with its dark spot removed?" The more he looked at that fair countenance, the more intense became his longing to see the original. He shut himself up in his room and, refusing all nourishment, was soon utterly exhausted by the fever of love.

His friends informed King Mahasena of what had happened. The king approached Sundarasena and said, "My son, why do you conceal your feelings? There is nothing to be ashamed about. Mandaravati is a pearl among maidens. She will be a good match for you. Moreover, I know her father, Mandaradeva. Why torment yourself about some-

thing which can be easily arranged through an ambassador?" And so the king despatched a trusted envoy to Hamsadvipa.

The envoy, whose name was Surathadeva, carried with him the portrait of Sundarasena executed by Katyayani. Travelling as fast as he could, he reached the city of Shashan-kapura on the sea-shore. There he met King Mahendraditya, one of Mahasena's allies, who placed at his disposal a ship for the subsequent journey to Hamsadvipa. After a long voyage, Surathadeva reached the island of Hamsadvipa and announced himself in the palace of King Mandaradeva.

When the ambassador conveyed the proposal of marriage, the king was delighted. He sent for his wife and daughter. They unrolled the canvas and looked at the portrait. The king immediately discarded his former notion that no suitable match could be found for his daughter. He said, "My daughter's beauty will not go in vain if she weds this prince. They will complete each other, like the swan and the lotus-bed."

Meanwhile the princess had swooned away through excess of love as soon as she had set her eyes on the picture. She was carried to the inner apartments and nursed back into consciousness. Her father assured her that her desire would be fulfilled. He sent his own ambassador, a Brahmin named Kumaradatta, to convey to King Mahasena his acceptance of the proposal.

The city of Alaka rejoiced when the prince's engagement was announced. Astrologers were sent for and asked to name a suitable date for the wedding. They studied the horoscopes of Sundarasena and Mandaravati and declared that an auspicious date would present itself after three months, on the fifth day of the bright fortnight in the month of *kartika*. A messenger was again sent to Hamsadvipa and the date of the wedding was announced.

Every day that dawned saw Mandaravati more deeply in love than ever. The fire of separation scorched her. Sandalwood ointment was, to her limbs, a shower of hot coals. Her couch of lotus leaves was, to her, like a burning sand-bed. The rays of the moon were like the pointed

flames of a forest fire At last, unable to endure her separation from her betrothed, she declared that she would put an end to her life

Her parents saw her condition with deep anxiety After prolonged deliberation they said, "After all, King Mahasena of Alaka is on good terms with us Why should we allow our daughter to suffer like this? Let her go to Alaka and remain near her beloved, so that she may be able to endure the delay " Having come to this conclusion King Mandaradeva comforted his daughter A beautiful ship was made ready, luxuriously furnished, and placed in the hands of an expert captain Mandaravati set out for Alaka Her escort was Vinitamati, one of the trusted ministers of King Mandaradeva

The ship sailed smoothly for a few days And then fate took an evil turn A mighty, dark cloud, yelling like a bandit, descended upon the ship The gale dragged the ship, struck it with terrible force and broke it into pieces Vinitamati was drowned, all the treasure was lost, and the crew were never heard of again But the sea lifted up the princess and deposited her in a secluded spot on the shore Terrified and confused, Mandaravati emerged from the sea only to fall into the deeper ocean of grief She wept copiously, and her tears fell from her eyes like the pearls of a broken necklace

After a while, a hermit named Matanga came that way for his bath He was accompanied by his daughter, Yamuna, who had taken a vow of celibacy They were deeply moved at the sight of Mandaravati who looked helpless like a doe separated from a herd of deer Feeling reassured by their kindness, Mandaravati told them her story The hermit fondly took her to his hermitage and made her comfortable in every way In the company of Yamuna, Mandaravati was able to bear with her fate She remained there leading an ascetic life and waiting upon the sage But her future husband, whom she had never seen, was in her thoughts all the time

As the date recommended by the astrologers approached,

Prince Sundarasena and his friends started for Hamsadvipa. They stopped for a while at Shashankapura on the sea-shore, where King Mahendraditya welcomed them. When Prince Sundarasena rode through the streets of Shashankapura, the splendour of his face shook the hearts of all the fair maidens as a hurricane shakes lotus-buds. The prince spent the night in King Mahendraditya's magnificent palace. But he did not get a moment's sleep, so engrossed was his mind in the image of Mandaravati. Next morning he left his army in the city and started on the voyage to Hamsadvipa in a large ship well supplied with food and water. King Mahendraditya accompanied him.

After three days a terrible storm suddenly descended upon them. Even the forest on the shore shook this way and that, as if expressing its astonishment at the fury of the gale. Mighty sea-waves were turned upside down by the wind, as affections are inverted by the passage of time. Cries of terror rose from the cabins. Costly jewels were offered up to the sea, but the elements were not pacified. At last, when there was no further hope of saving the ship, the prince and his companions jumped into the sea. King Mahendraditya followed them. They were all expert swimmers; but the force of the waves scattered them in different directions. Prince Sundarasena and Dridhabuddhi luckily reached an abandoned ship and managed to climb upon it. After a while the wind fell and the sea became hushed, like a good man whose anger is appeased. The ship on which the prince and his friend had found shelter was gently wafted by the breeze to a distant part of the shore. There it stuck fast. The two companions jumped on dry land and their life was saved.

The prince fell into a state of deep depression. "Alas, my good friend Dridhabuddhi", he said, "We have escaped from the sea—but what is left to us now? All our companions are drowned, so is King Mahendraditya, who had joined us through pure courtesy. How shall my father endure his grief for me? And what will Mandaravati think when I fail to turn up on the day fixed for our wedding?" Dridha-

buddhi consoled him as much as he could, and the two friends began to look for fruits to sustain themselves

As they were entering the forest, they met two hermits who were going towards the sea for their bath. The hermits befriended them and invited them to their hermitage. Sundarasena and Dridhabuddhi settled down there, and derived comfort from the company of holy men.

Meanwhile, Bhumabhujā and Vikramashakti, having swam across, reached the shore at a place several miles away. They entered the great forest, and wandered in search of their leader. The remaining two friends, Chandaprabha and Vyaghraparākrama, also escaped from the sea, along with King Mahendraditya. They found that the ship, though damaged, was still seaworthy, and so they set sail for Shashankapura. The king returned sorrowfully to his palace, while the two friends proceeded to Alaka. When King Mahasena and his queen heard of the disaster that had befallen their son, they gave themselves up to bitter lamentation. It was with the greatest difficulty that their ministers prevented them from ending their lives. The king, however, retired from affairs of state. He began to lead an ascetic life in a temple of Siva outside the city.

Mandaravati's parents, too, were prostrated with grief when they heard of their daughter's disappearance after the shipwreck. King Mandaradeva entrusted his realm to loyal ministers and started for Alaka. He joined his partner in misfortune, and the two kings remained together in the temple, united by their common sorrow. They practised severe austerities in the hope of appeasing the wrath of the gods.

One day, as Sundarasena was wandering about in the forest, chance brought him to the hermitage of Matanga. There was a lake of crystal-clear water near the hermitage, and on the bank of the lake there were trees laden with luscious fruits. The prince refreshed himself with a bath and ate some of the fruits. As he was resting under a tree he saw some hermit maidens gathering flowers. He went closer and saw that one of the maidens was a peerless beauty.

She seemed to illumine the entire forest with her loveliness

The prince was amazed to see that the maiden bore a close resemblance to Mandaravati, whose picture he carried in his eyes. He said to his friend, "Dridhabuddhi, what marvel is this? Is she a nymph from heaven, or is she the presiding deity of this forest? And have you not noticed that she looks just like Mandaravati! But perhaps my distracted imagination is making sport of me. Mandaravati is in Hamsadvipa, far away!"

Sundarasena's reflexions were interrupted by a terror-stricken scream that came from the direction of the maidens. The two friends rushed there. They saw the peerless beauty being dragged away by a crocodile. The maidens cried, "Help, help! Oh woodland gods, save our dearest Mandaravati."

These words were like nectar to Sundarasena's ears. He rushed forward and killed the crocodile with a dagger. Mandaravati escaped unhurt. When she got over her fear, she reflected, 'Who is this hero that has appeared in the forest from nowhere and saved my life? And how amazing that he should look so much like my beloved Sundarasena! But heaven forbid! Why should the prince be exiled from his native land on the eve of our wedding?' With these thoughts she turned to one of her friends and said modestly, "Thank this noble gentleman on my behalf and take leave of him respectfully. We must return to the hermitage."

The prince now revealed his identity. As soon as Mandaravati heard that he was indeed the prince to whom she was engaged, she fainted through sheer excess of joy. The prince sprinkled cool water upon her face and fanned her back into consciousness. The two embraced each other, and even the herbs and flowers melted into tears at the sight of their union.

The maidens rushed to the hermitage and informed Matanga of what had happened. He came and comforted Sundarasena. "My son," he said, "I am sure that all your misfortunes will be over. You shall return to Alaka and reign happily for many years. You must cherish this maiden

tenderly, she is like a daughter to me " Sundarasena and Mandaravatī, though still grief-stricken through their separation from their parents, began to live in the hermitage. They sustained themselves with the hope that some day they would return to Alaka and get married.

A few days later, as the two of them, accompanied by Dridhabuddhi, were walking about near the shore, they saw a ship. They waved and the ship approached the shore. Sundarasena thought that he must not miss this chance of returning to Alaka. He persuaded the owner of the ship, a young and wealthy merchant, to give them a passage.

Now this merchant was wicked and cunning. At the sight of Mandaravatī, his passion was roused. Concealing his designs, he agreed to take all three of them on his ship. But as soon as Mandaravatī had climbed up, he pushed the other two down and set sail. Sundarasena wept helplessly as the ship moved away and Mandaravatī's piteous cries faded into the distance.

Dridhabuddhi tried to encourage him to adopt a manly course. "Arise, and stop this weeping and wailing," he said. "Is your conduct worthy of a hero? We must travel quickly through the forest and somehow secure help so that this brigand may be intercepted. In the hour of calamity we must not remain idle." And so the two friends hastened through the forest, hoping to find some human habitation at the other end. Now and again Sundarasena would be overwhelmed with the grief of separation. Whenever he saw creepers in full bloom, he was reminded of Mandaravatī. In the songs of the cuckoos he heard the sweet voice of his beloved. He longed to linger at every beautiful spot and give himself up to brooding, but his friend urged him on.

When the two friends had almost reached the end of the forest another misfortune overtook them. Certain members of the Pulinda tribe, who were on the look out for human victims as an offering to Durga, attacked them. The prince fought bravely and a number of tribesmen were killed. But at last he was overpowered through the sheer weight of their numbers. Sundarasena and Dridhabuddhi were

bound with ropes and carried to a prison. It was a dark cell, full of vermin and cobwebs, with snakes and scorpions crawling in and out. In this place they were amazed to see their two companions Bhimabhuja and Vikramashakti. The prince exclaimed, "Alas, strange are the ways of fate. I desired with all my heart that I should see these friends of mine again. My desire is granted, but where do I see them? In this hell, waiting to be executed!"

On the fourteenth day of the month, the bandits dragged the prisoners out of the cell and hauled them up before the image of Durga. The king of the Pulindas, Vindhyaketu, had already arrived to witness the ceremony. Now this king had often visited Alaka to pay homage to King Mahasena, whose overlordship was recognized by all the neighbouring kingdoms. Sundarasena recognised him but kept quiet.

Vindhyaketu said to one of his followers, "Where is that human victim who put up such a brave fight against you? I am curious to see him." Sundarasena was brought near Vindhyaketu. When the Pulinda Chief saw him he half-recognized the prince and asked him who he was. Sundarasena said haughtily, "How does it matter to you where I come from? Go ahead with your ceremony and finish it as quickly as you can." Vindhyaketu recognized him completely by his voice and said, "Ah, wretch that I am! What benefits have I not received from King Mahasena? And how do I repay them? By ill-treating his son, and preparing to kill him." He ordered his followers to release Sundarasena and his companions. He embraced the prince with great affection and conducted him to his mansion. After the prince and his friends had eaten their meal and rested, Vindhyaketu asked them how they happened to be in that forest. The prince narrated his adventures and Vindhyaketu heard them with great amazement.

Sundarasena's stars had now again begun to smile upon him. His bad days were over. No sooner had he narrated his adventures than a tribesman came running to the king of Pulindas and said, "Oh King, a certain merchant was

shipwrecked and we captured him along with a prodigious amount of wealth. The villain has in his possession a very beautiful lady. We have imprisoned them both, and they shall soon be brought into your presence."

After a short while, Vindhyaketu's soldiers came with their captives. Imagine the joy and surprise of Sundarasena when he saw that the beautiful lady was none other than Princess Mandaravati! The merchant was given a sound thrashing. In a voice trembling with fear he said, "Spare me, sinner though I am. It is true that I had evil intentions, but no harm has been done. This saintly lady has preserved her honour. She has kept me at a distance as though she were a blazing fire. When she repulsed me so violently, I decided to carry her to my own country and, after allaying her anger, to make her my wife." Vindhyaketu wanted to execute the merchant on the spot. But Sundarasena intervened. The merchant's wealth was confiscated and he was driven into the forest.

Vindhyaketu paid all honour to Mandaravati. She was provided with new clothes and Pulinda women attended to her toilet. That evening the king gave a great banquet at which accomplished dancers and singers performed before the guests.

At Sundarasena's request the king of Pulindas despatched a messenger with a letter for King Mahasena. The messenger reached Alaka just when the king and queen, unable to endure their grief any longer, had decided to immolate themselves in a fire in front of the temple of Siva. When news of Sundarasena's safety was announced, the city of Alaka went wild with joy. The letter-carrier was loaded with gifts. Next day, impatient to meet his son, King Mahasena marched towards the land of the Pulindas, accompanied by the king of Hamsadvipa.

Sundarasena and Mandaravati met the king's party on the way. Great was their rejoicing when the two young people met their fathers again. Mandaravati touched the feet of her future father-in-law, and all those who watched the scene were inundated by waves of joy.

Shortly after this the hour fixed by the astrologers arrived. The marriage of Sundarasena and Mandaravati was celebrated with unprecedented magnificence. King Mandaradeva returned to Hamsadvīpa. King Mahendraditya who had proved such a faithful and loving ally, bestowed many presents on the newly-wedded couple and returned to Shashankapura. And Vindhya-ketu, the lord of the great wilderness, after apologizing to King Mahasena for the harshness he had unwittingly shown to his son, made his way back to the forest.

A few months later, King Mahasena, perceiving that his son was virtuous, and that the happiness of the subjects was safe in his hands, placed him on the throne and retired to the forest. Thus Sundarasena became the King of Alaka. With the help of his five faithful companions he subjugated all the kingdoms that his father had omitted to conquer. And for a long, long time he ruled over his mighty empire in the company of his beloved queen, Mandaravati.

Which is the Wicked Sex?

In the city of Pataliputra there once lived a prince named Vikramakesariṃ. Providence had made him a treasure of virtues and he himself possessed a treasure of jewels. Now this prince had a parrot whom he loved very dearly. The name of this parrot was Vīdagha-chudamani. The extraordinary thing about him was that he knew all the *Shāstras* and his intellect was as sharp as a razor. In fact his parrot-existence was the temporary result of Indra's curse. He was actually a *Gandharava* named Chitraratha. For some fault or the other he was banished from his celestial home and sent on the earth as a parrot.

Prince Vikramakesariṃ consulted this wise bird in all important matters. In course of time the prince married, on the parrot's advice, a princess of the royal family of

Magadha The name of the princess was Chandraprabha Now, as chance would have it, she possessed a *maina* named Somika who was the equal of the parrot in knowledge and wisdom She, too, was once a denizen of the celestial regions She was a nymph, and her real name was Tilottama Owing to some transgression of rules she had been banished from heaven and condemned to live as a *maina* for a while

Princess Chandraprabha brought the *maina* along with her to her husband's palace The two birds were lodged in the same cage They were looked after with great affection and they themselves never failed to give to the prince and the princess appropriate advice on all occasions

One day the parrot said to the *maina* "My dear, we live in the same cage, perch on the same rod and share the same food Why should we not get married? I am proposing to you Will you accept me?"

To his surprise the *maina* turned him down unceremoniously "I have nothing against *you*", she said "But all males are wicked and ungrateful I shall never allow myself to get involved in a permanent attachment with any member of that sex "

The parrot was touched to the quick by this aspersion on the male sex "How dare you utter such a falsehood!", he said sharply "The fact is exactly the reverse All females are cruel and faithless "

And so a mighty dispute arose between them When all their arguments and counter-arguments led to nothing, they decided to submit their case to the judgment of the prince A bargain was made between them should the parrot win his case, the *maina* was to become his wife, should he lose, he was to become her slave

The prince agreed to act as the judge The birds were invited to the royal judgment-hall and the issue between them was placed before the prince The judge said to the *maina*, "You assert that males are ungrateful How do you support this statement?"

The *maina* said, "Sir, I shall advance no arguments I shall merely narrate a true story On the basis of my

story you can judge whether or not males are ungrateful wretches "

And so she told the following story

* * *

In the city of Kamandaki there was a rich merchant named Arthadatta. A son was born to him and was given the name of Dhanadatta. When he grew up Dhanadatta fell into evil company, and, on his father's death, began to squander the family property. He took to gambling and allowed himself to be surrounded by a set of rogues. Wicked society is the root from which grows the tree of sin. In the case of Dhanadatta the tree grew very rapidly. He soon ran through his father's treasure and, ashamed of his poverty, left his country to wander in foreign lands.

In the course of his travels he reached the prosperous city of Chandanapura where chance led him to the house of a merchant. In spite of his poverty and dissipation Dhanadatta still looked a presentable young man. The merchant took a fancy to him and admitted him to his household. Since the newcomer was of noble descent, and his demeanour was polished, the merchant bestowed upon him the hand of his daughter Ratnavali. He settled a dower upon his son-in-law and Dhanadatta began to live comfortably in his wife's house.

But he did not remain content with his new-found happiness. Being in possession of wealth once again, he longed for fresh pleasures and wanted to return to his own country. His father-in-law was unwilling to let him go, since Ratnavali was his only child. But Dhanadatta insisted so eagerly that the merchant had to agree. So the young man set out, accompanied by his wife and an old serving-maid. Ratnavali was wearing expensive jewelry. As they were passing through a deep forest, the sight of his wife's ornaments stirred the villain in Dhanadatta. On the pretext that there was a danger of robbers, he persuaded his wife to part with her ornaments and make them over to him for safe-keeping.

And now perceive, noble prince, how brutal and heart-

less the male sex can be This villain, Dhanadatta, threw his innocent and virtuous wife into a ravine along with the old woman And, having done this wicked deed, he went away chuckling at the thought of all the gems in his pocket

The old woman was killed, but Ratnavali was caught in a tangled mass of creepers and her life was saved Painfully she climbed out of the ravine, clinging to branches of trees growing on the mountainside Groping in all directions she ultimately reached the main road and, with her limbs sorely bruised, returned to her father's house Her parents were shocked to see her in that condition and anxiously asked what had befallen her

And now perceive, noble prince, how generous and faithful a female can be Poor Ratnavali, so outrageously treated by her husband, swallowed all her humiliation and never breathed a word about Dhanadatta's treachery "We were set upon by bandits", she said "My husband was bound and taken away The old woman and myself were thrown into a deep valley Luckily for me I was dragged out of the ravine by a kindhearted traveller The old woman died of her injuries but I managed to scramble back home" Her parents comforted her and she remained with them, thinking of her husband all the time

Meanwhile Dhanadatta reached his home and resumed his former ways He sold the ornaments that he had so deceitfully obtained from his wife and very soon his house became a gambling den But the cash did not last long Once more he found himself without a coin and, with incredible impudence, decided to revisit his father-in-law and secure more wealth He reflected 'The merchant is a simple-minded person I shall tell him that I have left my wife at home He will trust me I can easily get round him and obtain a substantial sum of money'

But when he approached his father-in-law's house whom should he see but his own wife! Dhanadatta was taken aback, but his wife came to him and fell at his feet However wicked a husband might be, a good wife does not waver in her affection Ratnavali told him the story that she

had cooked for her parents. Dhanadatta was now emboldened and entered his father-in-law's house. The merchant embraced him fondly and said, "My son, fate has been kind to us. You have escaped from the hands of the bandits without a scratch. Now remain here peacefully."

But is there any limit to the wickedness of a male? For a few days Dhanadatta lived with Ratnavali, pretending to love her tenderly. And then, grasping his chance one dark night, he killed his wife while she slept upon his bosom. He grabbed all the ornaments that she was wearing and others that were kept in the jewel-box. Then, slipping out of the house unobserved, he hastened to his own city in order to indulge in fresh dissipations.

Such is the race of males. It is for you to judge, Oh Prince, whether my remarks were unjustified.

* * *

Prince Vikramakesari, having heard the *mama's* story with great interest, turned to the parrot. "My dear Vidagdha-chudamani", he said, "you have heard Somika's presentation of the case. Now what do *you* have to say?"

The parrot replied, "Prince, I still maintain that all females are wicked and disloyal. Moreover, they are thoroughly immoral and given to bodily cravings. Let me tell you a true story to prove this."

And so the parrot narrated the following story.

* * *

There was once a merchant named Dharmadatta. He had a daughter whose beauty was the talk of the city. Her name was Vasudatta. Her father loved her dearly and found for her a young man worthy to be her husband. The name of this young man was Samudradatta and he lived in the city of Tamralipti, renowned for the honesty of its inhabitants. Samudradatta was rich, virtuous and exceedingly handsome. Lovely women gazed upon him as doves gaze upon the moon.

For some time after their marriage Samudradatta and

Vasudatta lived happily together. But as soon as her husband went to his own city on a visit, Vasudatta forgot her marriage-vows. Fickle and unfaithful, as females generally are, she fixed her attention upon a handsome young man who lived near her father's house. She invited him through a go-between and very soon adopted him as her paramour.

When the husband returned, Vasudatta's parents decorated the house with great joy. They made her put on new clothes and jewels. But the young woman was indifferent to her husband. When he spoke to her she pretended to be asleep. And when, overcome by fatigue, he was himself sunk in the oblivion of sleep, she made ready to slip out of the house. At that very moment a thief entered the house and watched her movements. The thief reflected 'What a strange situation. She has gone out at dead of night wearing those very jewels which I had come to steal. There is something fishy here. Let me follow her and see where she goes.' And so the thief kept an eye on her, following her from a distance. She entered a garden outside the city and began to look for her lover, with whom she had made a secret assignation.

But the lover had been surprised by the city guards, taken for a runaway thief, and put to death. His body dangled from a tree and there was a halter round his neck. Vasudatta was distracted, but only for a while. She lowered her paramour's body and, hoping that he might still be alive, adorned it with flowers and perfumes. Even though he was senseless she embraced him, so completely was her mind blinded by passion. Meanwhile a goblin had taken possession of the corpse and he suddenly bit off Vasudatta's nose. Convinced that her lover was indeed dead, and suffering great pain, she slowly made her way to her own apartment. The thief who had watched the entire sequence of events was shocked. 'Will woman's wickedness admit no limit!' he reflected. 'Black and dark like a well is the mind of a female. It is unfathomable. I wonder what she will do now.' And he followed her again, out of curiosity.

Vasudatta entered her own chamber where her husband

was sleeping and started screaming, "Help! help! This wicked husband of mine has crossed all limits of cruelty Now he has cut off my nose, though I have done him no wrong Save me, father! He will not hesitate to kill me " Her cries awakened everybody in the house and her parents came rushing to the chamber, followed by servants and neighbours Seeing that her nose had been chopped off, Vasudatta's father bound her husband with stout ropes The poor man remained speechless and did not understand why every one had suddenly turned against him In the midst of this confusion the thief quietly slipped away

Dharmadatta had great influence with the king and demanded that the husband should be executed The king looked into all the circumstances and ordered that the death sentence be carried out The young man pleaded innocence but no one listened to his version of the story As he was being led to the place of execution, the thief approached the officers and said, "This man is innocent I know the true circumstances Take me to the King I shall reveal the whole story "

So they took him to the king and, after receiving a promise of pardon for his acts of thievery, he narrated the entire story The king seemed to doubt his words But the thief said, "Your Majesty, if you do not believe me, please send your officers to the garden which I have mentioned I am sure you will find this woman's nose in the corpse's mouth " The king accepted the suggestion and the officers, after visiting the garden, confirmed the thief's version

The king was incensed by the woman's wickedness, and ordered that her ears also should be cut off She was then banished from the country, while the young man who had come very near death through her wickedness was not only acquitted honourably but was also given costly presents And the thief, who had furthered the ends of justice, was appointed the Chief Magistrate of the city

"So you see, noble prince," said Vidagdhaśrī, "that females are wicked and treacherous by nature. It is now for you to judge between me and Soma." "

Prince Vikramaditya was unable to make up his mind. He was pondering over the two stories that he had heard, and trying to decide which of them had greater force, when Indra's curse expired and the parrot once more became the *Gandharva* Chitrakūṭa. Assuming a heavenly form, he flew away into the unknown. At that very moment the *maina*'s term of earthly existence also expired. The curse pronounced upon her ceased to be effective. Forthwith she became the heavenly nymph Tilottama and vanished from sight.

And so the dispute concerning the wickedness of the sexes remained undecided in the judgment-hall of Prince Vikramaditya.

The Story of Chandrasvamin

IN the good old days when Kamalavarman ruled in the city of Devakamalapura, there lived a Brahmin named Chandrasvamin. He was pious, erudite and generous. His wife, Devamati, was a worthy companion to him in every way. She was modest, gentle and devoted to her husband.

To this excellent couple a son was born who carried auspicious marks. At the moment of his birth a voice was heard from Heaven. 'Chandrasvamin, mark this well', said the voice. 'Your son is destined to be a great king. You must give him the name of Mahipala.' And so the child was named Mahipala. In course of time he was trained in all the sciences and arts, and became proficient in all the manly sports. Meanwhile a daughter was also born to Chandrasvamin and Devamati. She was named Chandravati and grew up into a beautiful maiden.

The Brahmin lived happily for many years with his wife

and children. And then fortune chose to depart from his household. The country was ravaged by a famine. There was want, greed and oppression everywhere. Even the king departed from the right path and began to extort from his subjects whatever wealth had remained with them. At last Devamati said to her husband, "My dear, the children will perish for want of food. Let us migrate from this city and go to my father's place." But her husband did not accept the suggestion in its entirety. "It is a sin to desert one's home during a famine", he said. "We must remain here. But I shall take the children to your father. They will be safe there and shall return to us when better times prevail."

And so Chandrasvamin set out from the city along with Mahipala and Chandravati. After traversing many miles he came to a wilderness. The children were exhausted by thirst. They were unable to walk any further. So Chandrasvamin left them under a tree and went in search of water.

Before he was able to secure water for his children, he was surprised by *bhūts* who were on the look out for a human victim to be offered up to their goddess. The poor Brahmin was taken to a village and fettered. He grieved piteously for his children, so cruelly abandoned in a burning wilderness. He passed the night in lamentation, but when in the morning he saw the sun he dropped on his knees and prayed to that mighty lamp of the heavens. "Oh lord of the sky", he said, "I bow to you. You are the source of brightness and the disperser of gloom. Like Vishnu you pervade the three worlds. Like Siva you are the treasure-house of blessings. You are the supreme master of all living creatures. You call the sleeping Universe to activity. You deposit your brilliance in the fire and in the moon saying, out of pity for them, 'let these two dull objects shine', and they shine forth. When you emerge from the eastern horizon all the demons become powerless, and the virtuous rejoice. Now disperse the darkness of my grief, Oh matchless Illuminator. I take refuge in you."

When the Brahmin had paid his homage, the sun was propitiated "Chandrasvamin", said the heavenly deity, "I am pleased with you You shall not be put to death And by my favour you shall be re-united with your children "

After a few hours the chief of the *bhils* came and said to the Brahmin, "You are lucky, my dear fellow The Sun-God came to me in a dream last night and ordered me to release you Get up, and go where you will " With these words the *bhil* removed Chandrasvamin's fetters, made him a present of pearls and musk, and set him at liberty

In the meanwhile, Mahipala and his sister were picked up by a merchant named Sarthadhara The merchant observed the auspicious marks that Mahipala carried on his person, and took the two children with him to his own country The boy was placed in charge of the sacred fire in the merchant's house

One day Anantasvamin, one of the ministers of King Taravarman, visited the merchant, who was an old friend of his There he saw Mahipala and took a great liking to him When he heard the story of the two abandoned children, Anantasvamin, who was himself a Brahmin, begged his friend to make them over to him The merchant agreed Mahipala and Chandravati accompanied the minister on his journey and eventually reached the city of Tarapura There they began to live in great luxury Anantasvamin had no children of his own and treated his new wards with the greatest affection

Released by the *bhils*, Chandrasvamin returned to the spot where he had left his children Great was his sorrow when he did not find any trace of his son or daughter He wandered about for many days and ultimately reached the city of Jalapura on the sea-shore There he entered the house of a certain Brahmin who said to him, "A merchant named Kanakavarman came here some days ago He found in the forest a Brahmin boy and a girl, and has gone off with them to the island of Narikela I feel sure that they must be your children " Chandrasvamin made up his mind to undertake the long voyage to Narikela Luckily

for him he was introduced to a merchant named Vishnuvarman who was about to set out on a sea voyage in the same direction. The two of them embarked and, after sailing for several weeks, reached Narikela. But Chandrasvamin's troubles were not over. He was told that Kanakavarman, who had indeed come to Narikela with two Brahmin children, had proceeded to the island of Kataha. The distraught father went to Kataha from where he was directed to the islands of Karpura and Simhala. Wherever he went he was told that Kanakavarman had come and gone.

At last he succeeded in locating the merchant in the city of Chitrakuta. Every vein in his body throbbed with suspense as he entered Kanakavarman's house. The merchant summoned the two children and Chandrasvamin discovered with a shock that they were not his. He fell into the deepest gloom and lamented for a long time. "Oh malignant Providence", he exclaimed, "why did you, like a wicked master, hold out hopes to me if you had no intention of fulfilling them? Why did you make me wander from island to island on a fruitless trail?" After sorrowing in this fashion for many hours, he regained his courage—the courage of despair.

He vowed to recover his children. "If I do not find Mahipala and Chandravati within the course of a year", he said, "I shall become an ascetic on the Ganga's bank and wear out my body by austerities."

Far and wide did Chandrasvamin wander, from town to village and from village to forest. He would often spend his nights on tree-tops to save himself from dangerous beasts. One day, as he had climbed into a tall tree and was about to settle down for the night, he saw at the foot of the tree a group of forest deities presided over by Narayani. One of the slaves belonging to Narayani saw Chandrasvamin. The Brahmin, too, returned her gaze. The two fell in love with each other. The goddess Narayani perceived their feelings and, summoning the Brahmin, asked him whether he was in love. When Chandrasvamin confessed his love, the goddess offered to perform the nuptials between him

and her attendant The Brahmin replied, "Oh Goddess, it is true that my mind has shown fickleness But I shall hold it in check How can I touch a strange woman? I am a married man and must remain faithful to my wife " The goddess said, "My son, I am pleased with you for your self-control I give you this boon very soon you shall find your children And I also give you this gift—a magic lotus which never fades and which can neutralise poison " And so Chandrasvamin received the miraculous lotus from Narayani, who promptly vanished into nothingness

Continuing his wanderings, he at last reached the city of Tarapura Chance directed his footsteps to the mansion of Anantasvamin He knocked at the door in order to beg for food, having heard of the master's hospitality The minister invited him inside the house, discerned his learning, and asked him to stay for dinner Before the meal was served the Brahmin went to bathe in a lake nearby

While he was returning, he heard the sound of lamentation When he made enquiries about the cause of the grief which was being expressed by so many people, he was told 'You are a stranger, otherwise you would have known that Anantasvamin, the gracious minister, has adopted a Brahmin boy and his sister whom he found in a forest The boy, whose name is Mahipala, has just been bitten by a poisonous snake That is why there is so much grief in the city Mahipala is the darling of every one's eyes'

Chandrasvamin rushed back to Anantasvamin's home and saw his son surrounded by a large number of people who were moaning in the extremity of sorrow He suddenly recalled that the lotus which he was carrying in his hand was an antidote to poison So he put the lotus to Mahipala's nose and uttered a prayer The moment the boy smelled that wonderful flower, the effects of the poison left him He rose up, like one just awakened from sleep Every one rejoiced Chandrasvamin was honoured and was introduced to King Taravarman He made himself at home in Anantasvamin's house and began to spend his days happily with his two children By and by he earned the intimate friend-

ship of the king who, impressed by the virtues of Mahipala, gave him the hand of his daughter Bandhumati. After a while the king, who had no son of his own, made over to Mahipala the affairs of state, and went into retirement.

Mahipala raised his father to a high office. One day Chandrasvamin said to Mahipala, "My son, we must now think of your dearest mother. If she hears that you have been elevated to the throne, she might think that power and glory have gone to your head, and that you have forgotten her. In her anger she might even curse you. Remember, he who incurs the displeasure of his mother can never enjoy prosperity. On the contrary those who are devoted to their parents never fail to receive their due reward. The story of Dharmavyadha should be a lesson to you."

Mahipala said, "Father, I shall always remember your teaching and shall never swerve in my devotion to you and to my mother. But I have not heard the story of Dharmavyadha. Will you please narrate it for me?"

And so Chandrasvamin narrated the following story

* * *

There was once a hermit. His austerities had enabled him to acquire super-human powers. He had undergone penance and mastered his faculties. But he still had one weakness—he was short-tempered. One day, as he sat in the shade of a tree, a crow dropped dirt upon him. The hermit looked up in great anger and fixed his flaming eyes upon the crow, who was immediately reduced to ashes. From that moment the hermit developed great pride in the power of his austerities.

One day, as he was begging for alms in a certain city, he came to a Brahmin's house. The Brahmin's wife opened the door for him and said, "Sir, please wait for a little while. I am waiting upon my husband." The hermit did not like this remark. He looked at her angrily, but the good woman laughed and said, "Remember, I am not a crow." The hermit was astonished by these words and

wondered how she could possibly have known the fate of the crow After she had attended to her husband's needs, the virtuous woman brought food for the hermit who said to her with great humility, "I shall not accept alms from you until you tell me how you came to know of my adventure with the crow in the forest "

"Why, that is easy", she said, "I know of no virtue except devotion to my husband By the practice of this virtue I have received such power of discernment But if you really want to know the might of virtue go and see Dharmavyadha, the butcher "

The hermit took the portion of food offered to him and departed The next day he visited the butcher's shop where Dharmavyadha was selling flesh As soon as the hermit approached, the butcher said "Well, holy hermit, who has sent you here? The faithful wife, I suppose " The hermit asked in his astonishment, "You are a mere seller of flesh How could you acquire such super-human knowledge?" Dharmavyadha replied, "Listen, sir I am a simple man The only virtue that I know of is devotion to my parents I bathe only after providing them with the requisites for a bath I eat only after feeding them I sleep only after putting them to bed That is how I have come to possess such knowledge The faithful wife whom you have just met is, like me, free from pride And that is why in the case of neither of us is there any hindrance to the attainment of knowledge You too, Sir, should perform your duties as a hermit without giving way to pride That will lead you to supreme comprehension "

The hermit obeyed the advice of Dharmavyadha and returned to the forest purged of his overweening self-confidence

* * *

Chandrasvamin continued, "Such, my son, is the importance of devotion to one's parents Get up, then, and come with me Your mother must be impatient to see you " Mahipala made over the burden of his kingdom to his spiri-

tual father, Anantasvamin, who had rescued him from the forest. And then father and son set out towards the land of their birth.

After a long journey they reached home. Devamati was refreshed by the sight of her son as a nightingale is refreshed by the arrival of spring. Mahipala stayed at home with his mother for some days, conversing with all his relatives, and describing the adventures through which he and his father had passed.

Meanwhile in the city of Tarapura princess Bandhumati woke up to find that her husband had gone away without informing her. She was distressed and in her loneliness wandered about in her palace garden. The tears shed by her seemed to double her necklace. She failed to find solace in anything. At last the minister Anantasvamin came and comforted her. He told her the story of Nala and Damayanti. When Bandhumati heard how Damayanti, after a series of misfortunes, was eventually reunited with her dear husband, she began to feel a little more optimistic about her own future.

And indeed after a few days Mahipala returned to Tarapura with his parents. His appearance brought joy to Bandhumati as the full moon gladdens the waves of the mighty ocean. Chandrasvamin's troubles were now finally at an end. His son ruled his kingdom wisely and justly, and he himself spent his time discharging the functions of his high office.

The Story of King Udayana

No other part of our earth has won greater renown than the country of Vatsa. God must have created this region deliberately to humble the pride of heaven—so beautiful, so glorious is it in every way.

The chief city of this land is Kaushambi, the favourite

residence of the goddess of plenty Here, long ago, King Shatanika held his sway He came of the great Pandava family He was the son of Janamejaya, and traced his ancestry to the mighty Arjuna, whose valour was tested in a struggle against Siva himself

For many years King Shatanika and his wife, Vishnumati, bewailed the absence of progeny One day the king, who was roaming in a forest in search of game, strayed into the hermitage of Shandilya In the course of their conversation the king told the sage how earnestly he longed for a son Moved by his unhappiness, Shandilya came to Kaushambi and prepared a potion for the queen Mystic verses were recited as the queen sipped the medicine Shandilya's efforts did not go in vain Very soon a son was born to Shantanika and Vishnumati

The boy was named Sahasranika He grew into a fine lad and became an ornament to his father, as humility is an ornament to perfection Sahasranika was proclaimed the Crown Prince and King Shatanika gradually prepared to withdraw himself from the cares of government

But, when destiny wills otherwise, can any one find peace or leisure? A war broke out between the gods and demons Indra sent an urgent message asking Shatanika to assist him in his hour of need The king entrusted his son to the care of his minister, Yogandhara, and his commander-in-chief, Supratika Then he hurried to the battlefield where, fighting bravely, he met with a hero's death Vishnumati perished on her husband's pyre and Sahasranika became the ruler of Vatsa

The war was over The demons were routed Sahasranika went to Indra's heavenly city to join the festivities in celebration of the victory There he saw many wondrous sights, but none that stirred him more than the fair ones who sported in the garden of Indra "Ah!", he exclaimed, "If only I could find a wife as lovely as one of these beauties!"

Perceiving his desire, Indra cheered him "My friend", he said, "You have not the least reason to feel despondent.

A maiden worthy to be your wife was born many years ago Your bride-to-be is Mrigavati, daughter of King Kritavarman of Ayodhya Her beauty will hold you spellbound " With these words Indra bade him farewell and placed at his disposal his own chariot to convey him back from Heaven to earth The chariot was steered by Indra's favourite driver, Matali

As Sahasranika set out from heaven, his heart was burning with love for the maiden whose charms Indra had described When, therefore, a nymph called Tilottama spoke to him, just as he was about to leave, her tender words made no impression upon him In fact he scarcely heard her, so entirely was he wrapped in the vision of his future wife Tilottama angrily cursed him for his indifference "Very well, proud monarch!", she threatened, "You will suffer for this For a long period of fourteen years will you endure separation from this woman, this Mrigavati whose image has led you to slight me " But even this imprecation was heard only by Matali The king was so much absorbed in his thoughts that he did not hear a syllable

As soon as the king returned to Kaushambi, he sent an ambassador to Ayodhya with a proposal of marriage between himself and Princess Mrigavati King Kritavarman of Ayodhya, and his queen, Kalavati, received the message with unfeigned delight The ambassador from Kaushambi was lavishly entertained Mrigavati herself sang and danced at the reception Acceptance of the proposal was announced without delay Both kingdoms rejoiced as Sahasranika and Mrigavati were united in matrimony

Fortune seemed to smile upon Kaushambi Not long after the king's marriage, his counsellors were blessed with sons The sons of Yogandhara and Supratika were named, respectively, as Yaugandharayana and Rumanvat A son was also born to the Master of Revels He was named Vasantaka Finally, as if to crown the king's happiness, Mrigavati told him that she was expecting a child

But the king's joy was destined to be short-lived From

the heights of contentment he was soon to dive into the depths of bitter sorrow. A great tragedy awaited him.

Mrigavati, as her pregnancy advanced, acquired strange longings. Among other things, she craved for a bath in a tank filled with blood. The king was too righteous to permit destruction of any living creature to gratify such a whim. But he had a tank filled to the brim with the juice of lac and other red extracts. While the queen was bathing in the blood-red water, an eagle suddenly pounced upon her and carried her off, mistaking her for a lump of raw flesh. The king helplessly watched his beloved disappearing in the sky and, unable to bear the grief, he fell into a swoon.

Matali, the charioteer of Indra, divined what had come to pass. He visited Kaushambi and, when the king had somewhat recovered his senses, revealed the curse uttered by Tilottama. Sahasranika was plunged in gloom, but the hope of future reunion sustained him and he somehow turned his attention once again to affairs of state.

Meanwhile the eagle, discovering that his prey was alive, abandoned Mrigavati on the top of a mountain. Distracted with sorrow and fear, she longed for death. But death did not come her way. Even when she flung herself in front of a wild elephant, she remained unharmed. The mighty beast gently put her aside. An enormous serpent rose up and prepared to swallow her. But a heavenly hero mysteriously appeared from nowhere, slew the serpent, and vanished.

After some time a hermit's son happened to pass that way in search of roots and fruit. He heard the wailing and lamentation of the unhappy queen and, with words of consolation and good cheer, led her to the hermitage of Jamadagni. Here Mrigavati took up her abode and, when her time was due, gave birth to a charming son. As soon as the child was delivered, a voice was heard from heaven. 'Let the universe rejoice! A great king has been born. He shall win splendid fame, and his name shall be Udayana.'

And so the boy was named Udayana. He grew up in the peaceful grove with no other playmates than his own

wonderful talents Jamadagni instructed him in all the sciences and he also became skilled in archery, as behoved a warrior's son. And with infinite affection Mrigavati drew from her arm the bracelet that bore the name of Sahasranika and placed it on her son's

Once, roaming about in pursuit of deer, Udayana met a tribesman who had just captured a snake. Out of pity for the beautiful snake Udayana approached its captor and beseeched him to release the animal. The tribesman said, "My lord, I am a poor man. I make my living by exhibiting dancing snakes. The snake that had served me thus far died recently. After searching long in the great forest I found this one and charmed him into submission. Please do not ask me to part with my source of livelihood."

But Udayana was determined to see the snake set at liberty. He gave away his bracelet to the tribesman in exchange for the snake. As he was about to release the animal from bondage, and turn his footsteps homeward, the snake addressed him. "I am Vasunemi, the elder brother of Vasuki, monarch of the serpent race. In return for your generosity I give you four gifts: a lute of remarkable sweetness, a betel leaf that has special qualities, the art of weaving garlands that never fade, and the art of making indelible marks on the forehead."

Udayana received these gifts gratefully and returned to the hermitage of Jamadagni. His sight was like nectar to Mrigavati's eyes.

In the meantime the snake charmer wandered far and wide with his valuable acquisition. Eventually he reached a thriving market and tried to sell the bracelet. The royal mark on the ornament aroused suspicion. He was arrested by the police and hauled up before the king. Sahasranika questioned the man minutely and marvelled at the story he related. As he was fondly gazing at the bracelet that had once enhanced his beloved wife's charms a voice from heaven said: "Oh King, the curse is at an end. Your wife Mrigavati is residing in the hermitage of Jamadagni, together with your son."

These words assuaged the king's misery as the first raindrops of July relieve the heat-afflicted peacocks. He somehow passed that night, full of expectation, and the next morning set out with a chosen band of followers in the direction of the eastern mountain. The snake-charmer accompanied him and showed him the way.

In a few days Sahasranika reached the hermitage of Jamadagni on the eastern mountain. He met the sage, who looked like a graven image of piety. The harbour was so tranquil that even the deer had abandoned their friskiness. Here, at last, the king tasted the bliss of reunion with his long-lost wife. He saw for the first time his son, Udayana, and clasped him in a close embrace. For a long time his body was riveted to his son's, as if the hair which stood erect with joy had nailed them together.

The king bade a tender farewell to Jamadagni and set out for Kaushambi with Mrigavati and Udayana. The fawns of the *ashrama* followed them for many a mile with tearful eyes.

Diverting themselves on the way by describing their respective adventures during the period of separation, the king and queen approached their home. Kaushambi was decked out with banners and arches of welcome. When the royal party arrived, the citizens feasted their eyes upon their beloved king and queen, and upon the prince they had never seen.

Udayana was proclaimed as the Crown Prince and entrusted with more and more authority as days passed. The king led a life of leisure and ease in the company of Mrigavati. At last, when old age sent its grey messenger to the region of the king's temples, Udayana was installed upon the throne as the full-fledged sovereign. Sahasranika assigned to his son three worthy advisers—Rumanvat, Yaugandharayana and Vasantaka—whose fathers had served him faithfully and well. And then, having ensured the prosperity of his people, he ascended the Himalayas, accompanied by Mrigavati, to prepare for the last journey.

The kingdom of Vatsa prospered. Kaushambi became the

envy of the world Udayana ruled his subjects wisely and justly But he had one weakness which caused his counsellors great anxiety he was excessively fond of hunting When engaged in a chase he would forget everything else in the world He developed a particular fondness for trapping and subduing wild elephants Being an accomplished musician, Udayana made good use of the lute which the serpent Vasunemi had given him in his boyhood The dulcet notes which Udayana cajoled out of this lute cast a spell on infuriated elephants They became tame and submissive Overpowering them while in this state, the king brought back to his capital these mighty beasts of the forest

Many years passed Udayana, now in the prime of manhood, looked about him for a suitable wife Vasavadatta, the daughter of Chandamahasena, king of Ujjayini, was reputed for her beauty and grace Her charms were described to the king by so many people, and in such glowing terms, that he acquired a deep longing for the princess But how could he obtain her hand? Ujjayini and Kaushambi were traditional enemies and Udayana hesitated to make a proposal that was in danger of being discourteously received

Meanwhile, Chandamahasena himself had marked out Udayana as the most suitable husband he could find for his daughter He knew the advantages of such an alliance, the combined power of Ujjayini and Kaushambi would be invincible He made up his mind to employ every stratagem necessary to bring about the marriage To begin with, he sent a message to Udayana extolling his skill in music and requesting him to come over to Ujjayini and initiate Vasavadatta in the art

Udayana was justly furious at this presumptuous message He summoned his minister, Yaugandharayana, and said, "My friend, here is a message from Chandamahasena I fail to understand his purpose in sending such an impudent proposal Has any one ever heard of a monarch accepting a tutorship in an alien kingdom? What does the villain



The Story of King Udayana

mean by this?" Yaugandharayana said, "Your Majesty, I shall speak my mind plainly. This is what comes of acquiring a reputation for kingly vices. Evidently, the king of Ujjayini has heard of your passion for music and your interminable hunting expeditions. He has judged you as a person who cannot resist his impulses. And so he hopes to ensnare you by the charms of his daughter. Kings should not be under the influence of strong passions. Otherwise they are captured by their enemies, even as wild elephants are taken in pits!"

The king did not feel offended by his minister's plain words. He knew that they proceeded from an affectionate regard for his true interests. The very next day he sent an ambassador to Chandamahasena with the message, 'If your daughter wishes to be my pupil, let her come to Kau-shambi. I shall find some time to teach her.'

Udayana's anger did not abate even after the message was despatched. He declared that he would march against Ujjayini and bring Chandamahasena back in chains. Yaugandharayana restrained him. He said, "Sir, this is not the right course. Nor is it in your power to adopt it with any degree of success. Chandamahasena is a mighty monarch. Perhaps you are not familiar with his prowess. Let me tell you about it."

And then Yaugandharayana related the history of Chandamahasena's valorous deeds.

"You have already heard about Ujjayini," said Yaugandharayana, "the mighty city that boasts of a thousand palaces. Now this wonderful city of Ujjayini was once ruled by King Mahendravarman. He conquered many lands and bequeathed to his son, Jayasena, a kingdom that became the envy of all the monarchs in the world. To Jayasena was born a son who was named Mahasena. He grew up into a hero of stupendous strength.

When Mahasena ascended the throne he said, 'I now want two things truly worthy of me—a sword such as no hero has ever wielded, and a wife who combines all perfections in herself.' With this thought came the deter-

mination to undergo stern austerities in order to win these gifts from the gods. Mahasena went to the temple of Durga and propitiated the goddess through self-mortification. He remained without food and water for a long period and even cut off pieces of his own flesh as an offering to the deity.

Gratified by his devotion, the goddess appeared in visible form and said, 'My son, I am touched by your steadfastness. Your longings shall be fulfilled. Here is a sword that will make you invincible. Take it and perform heroic deeds. As for your second wish, you must know that your bride-to-be is Angaravati, the daughter of a powerful demon named Angaraka. She is the most beautiful maiden in the three worlds. You will be proud of her. Go back to Ujjayini now. And in commemoration of the cruel penance that you have performed, you will henceforward be called Chandamahasena.'

That is how Mahasena became Chandamahasena. Armed with his invincible sword, he vanquished all enemies. And his power was further increased when he came in possession of a fighting elephant named Nadagiri. Never was a more redoubtable elephant seen on a battlefield. At the mere sight of Nadagiri all other elephants fled in terror.

One day he saw in a forest an enormous wild boar. Its aspect was terrible. The blackness of a dark night seemed to be congealed into the solid body of that ferocious animal. Chandamahasena riddled the boar with arrows but it was none the worse for them. It boldly approached the king's chariot, smashed it into pieces, and disappeared into a cavern.

Intent upon vengeance, the king entered the deep cavern with only his bow to defend himself with. After he had travelled a long while through the gloomy cave, he suddenly came upon a splendid city. In the middle of the city there was a lake. And on the bank of the lake he saw a maiden of wondrous beauty. Her glance was like the arrow of love which cleaves the shield of self-restraint. The king was completely captivated by her charms and she, in her turn,

gazed upon him with eyes full of tenderness

Slowly she walked up to the king and asked, 'Noble Sir, what is your august name? And what has prompted you to visit our home?' When she told that he had come in pursuit of a wild boar, she gave expression to bitter anxiety 'Alas, you are lost!', she exclaimed, 'The boar that you have been pursuing is only an assumed form of the demon, Angaraka I am his daughter and I know how ruthless he is These maidens you see around me have all been carried off by him from the palaces of mighty kings He has imprisoned them here as servants to wait upon me At the moment he has discarded his animal guise and is resting in his true form But as soon as he wakes up he will do you injury' With these words the maiden burst into tears, for Angaravati, the daughter of Angaraka, was already in love with the king

Chandamahasena kept his presence of mind and said, 'Oh lovely maiden, if you wish me well do what I tell you and ask no questions As soon as your father wakes up you must go near him and pretend to weep When he asks you the reason of your agitation you must say "Dearest father, if some one were to slay you how could I bear to live? This thought is the cause of my grief"'

Angaravati did as she was told When the demon heard the reason of her anxiety he burst into laughter 'What a foolish child you are, my dear', he said 'How can any one possibly slay me? My entire body is protected by a shield that nothing can pierce There is only one unguarded spot in my left arm, but that is always concealed by my bow'

Chandamahasena heard this revelation from his place of concealment He bided his time, and as soon as the demon rose from his bath the king insolently challenged him to a fight Angaraka was preparing for his daily worship of Siva So he raised his left arm and made a gesture asking the king to wait for a few moments Chandamahasena grasped his opportunity and smote the demon at the vulnerable spot With a piercing cry Angaraka collapsed and lay dead on the ground The king took his daughter as his prize and

returned to Ujjayini

The marriage of Chandamahasena and Angaravati was celebrated with great pomp. After a few years two sons were born to them. The first was called Gopalaka and the second, Palaka. A great feast was held in honour of Indra. The same night Indra came to the king in a dream and said 'I am pleased by the reverence you have shown me. By my favour you will soon obtain a daughter of matchless beauty.'

In course of time the king was indeed blessed with a graceful daughter. When she was born, people thought that the creator was no longer content with one moon in the firmament and desired another on earth. And, since the girl was born through the blessing of Indra, who is also known as 'Vasava', the King named her Vasavadatta, 'Given by Vasava'."

* * *

This is how Yaugandharayana narrated the history of Chandamahasena. After a while he addressed King Udayana again. "You will thus see", he said, "that the king of Ujjayini is not to be trifled with. His power is immense and his capital city is situated in a difficult terrain. Nevertheless, you must not give up the hope of marrying Vasavadatta. She remains in the house of her father as Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity, remained in the gloomy depths of the ocean before it was churned. Moreover Chandamahasena is himself eager to give his daughter to you. Only, being a proud monarch, he wants to do so with a show of triumph."

When he heard these words Udayana became even more enamoured of beautiful Vasavadatta.

Meanwhile the ambassador from Vatsa travelled to Ujjayini and delivered his master's reply. When Chandamahasena heard the message he reflected 'Well, I was too simple to expect that the king of Vatsa could be so easily persuaded to come here. He will never agree. And of course I cannot send Vasavadatta to Kaushambi. That would be un-

becoming I must think of some clever stratagem to imprison him '

Ultimately the king, in consultation with his ministers, hit upon an unusual plan. He ordered skilled craftsmen to manufacture an artificial elephant. When it was ready, and he was satisfied that it was sufficiently life-like, he placed his bravest warriors inside the contraption and had it conveyed to a remote part of the Vindhya forest.

Udayana soon heard from his guards that an exceptionally large elephant was seen on the outskirts of his kingdom. He was tempted by the prospect of a splendid hunt. He also thought that, if the elephant was really as fantastically large as the guards claimed, it might well serve as a rival to Nadagiri. By capturing it alive he hoped to neutralise Chandamahasena's advantage.

And so, disregarding the warning of his court astrologers, Udayana set out for the Vindhya forest. On the southern slope he saw an elephant of truly magnificent appearance. Through fear of alarming it, the king made his companions halt at a distance and advanced alone. He approached the elephant slowly, playing a soft melody on his lute. Evening shadows were thickening and Udayana was completely deceived. The elephant flapped its ears, as if enraptured by the music, while it approached and retreated by turns. When the king was drawn deep into the forest, the warriors suddenly emerged from their place of concealment. Udayana was armed only with a hunting knife. Resistance was useless. He was overpowered and carried off to Ujjayini.

Chandamahasena came out to meet his royal captive and conveyed him to the palace with utmost respect. The citizens of Ujjayini saw the king of Vatsa with great admiration. He was like the moon—beautiful, but stained with defeat. Hearing that Udayana would be put to death, many of the citizens announced that they would commit suicide in protest. Chandamahasena calmed the agitation by publicly dispelling all rumours about Udayana's impending execution.

In the concert-hall of the royal palace, Vasavadatta was

introduced to Udayana as a pupil eager to learn the art of music. As soon as she saw him her heart was steeped in love. Her eyes were averted through modesty, but her mind was fastened to the royal visage of the instructor. The king of Vatsa, in his turn, was overwhelmed by Vasavadatta's loveliness. His anger melted away. In his lap was the magic lute, in his throat the unsung melody, and before him was Vasavadatta, the delight of his heart.

The guards who had accompanied Udayana to the Vindhya forest returned to Kaushambi and broke the news of the king's captivity. The enraged citizens called for an immediate assault on Ujjayini. But Rumanvat, the wise and trusted general, checked their impetuosity. He reminded them that Chandamahāsena was a powerful monarch and to attack him would mean endangering the very life of Udayana.

The three counsellors, Rumanvat, Yaugandharayana and Vasantaka, held a secret conference. After careful deliberation they adopted the plan which Yaugandharayana put forward. He said, "Friends, the country is loyal to our king. Nevertheless, it is necessary that the commander-in-chief should stay here to guard the city. You must remain alert. When the right moment comes you will be called upon to show your prowess. I shall go to Ujjayini, accompanied only by Vasantaka. I know spells for breaking through walls and rending fetters. And I can count upon King Udayana's shrewdness. His wisdom shines forth in adversity, just as the flash of lightning is particularly brilliant during a storm."

Thus, having entrusted to Rumanvat the care of the city, the wise minister set out with Vasantaka. He first visited Pulindaka, who ruled a kingdom in the hilly region of the Vindhyas. Yaugandharayana won him over and asked him to keep in readiness so that Udayana might find the necessary protection immediately after his flight from Ujjayini. The two friends next visited Mahakala, the dreadful burning-ground near Ujjayini, where they mastered many strange and unearthly charms.

Approaching the palace of Chandamahasena, Yaugandharayana made good use of his newly-acquired knowledge of spells. He transformed the appearance of Vasantaka as well as his own. Vasantaka now became an ugly buffoon with a large stomach and projecting teeth, while he himself assumed the form of an old, deformed hunchback. In these strange guises they soon attracted the curiosity of the townsfolk. With a crowd of jeering urchins at their heels, they reached the palace-gate. The women in the inner apartments, always on the look-out for some fresh source of diversion, saw from their balconies the antics of the hunchback and the clown. They described the spectacle to Vasavadatta.

Youth is twin brother to mirth. As soon as Vasavadatta came to know of this fun that was going on outside the walls of the palace, she sent a maid and ordered the strange visitors to be brought into the concert-room.

Yaugandharayana saw the king of Vatsa in fetters and burst into tears. However, he quickly mastered his grief and made a sign which Udayana immediately understood. Then Yaugandharayana, by means of his magic power, made himself invisible to Vasavadatta and her maids.

Vasavadatta exclaimed in astonishment, "Why, the madcap has vanished! Where could he have escaped?" Since Udayana continued to see his friend quite clearly, he grasped the situation. "Go, my good girl", he said gravely to Vasavadatta. "Bring the requisites for the worship of Sarasvatī so that we might resume the music-lesson." As soon as she was out of the hall Yaugandharayana taught the king a spell for breaking chains. He also attached a charm to the strings of his lute so that Vasavadatta might become entirely submissive to his will.

And, having done his work, the devoted minister slipped out of the palace unnoticed.

Day by day Vasavadatta felt ever more deeply attached to Udayana. Yaugandharayana saw that the time was ripe for taking the decisive step. He found an opportunity to speak to the king in absolute privacy. And he outlined

his plan in detail "Listen carefully, Your Majesty", he said "Although Chandamahaseṇa has made you captive by a mean artifice, he intends to bestow his daughter on you and to set you at liberty We must forestall him and carry off his daughter In this way we shall revenge ourselves upon him and the world will not think lightly of us "

But how could such a daring project be executed? The idea of kidnapping, without the backing of an army, Ujjayini's royal princess seemed absurd Yaugandharayana, however, had worked it all out "I have ascertained", he said, "that Vasavadatta has a remarkably swift female elephant named Bhadravati The only elephant capable of overtaking her is Nadagiri, but he will not fight against her! The *mahout* in charge of Bhadravati has already been won over He is our man All you have to do is to ensure the silence of the Superintendent of Royal Elephants This you can easily achieve through Vasavadatta's help The rest is easy You can escape at midnight and I shall make sure that the road you take is guarded by our new ally, Pulindaka "

Udayana confided the plan to Vasavadatta She readily threw in her lot with her future husband On the pretext of offering oblations to the gods, Vasavadatta got a supply of syrups to which wine was generously added After a ceremonial feast the Superintendent of the Royal Elephants, along with his staff, was treated to these intoxicating drinks

In the silence of the night the king of Vatsa, accompanied by Vasavadatta and her companion Kanchanmala, mounted Bhadravati and left the palace The gates were barred But Bhadravati, with one mighty blow, battered down one of the ramparts The guards outside were slain when they resisted In the morning, the news of Udayana's escape was made known to Chandamahaseṇa He ordered his son, Palaka, to pursue the fugitives Mounted on Nadagiri, Palaka succeeded in overtaking them, but at the sight of Bhadravati, Nadagiri refused to fight Palaka had to return to Ujjayini and Udayana advanced towards the Vindhya forest

Many adventures befell the party in the Vindhya forest Bhadravati, who had served them so faithfully, died after drinking the polluted water of a wayside pond Later, Udayana was attacked by brigands, but with unparalleled courage he fought and defeated them single-handed At last they reached the plateau where Pulindaka, the tribal chieftain, was waiting for them Rumanvat, the steadfast general, came from Kaushambi and joined his sovereign with a picked army of warriors

Vasavadatta, fatigued after the difficult journey and depressed at having abandoned her parents and brothers, came close to Udayana and whispered to him words of tender love She was bashful as well as impatient, and contrary feelings stirred her heart Soon, however, she felt cheered by the news that her father, reconciling himself to the turn of events, was sending a message of friendship and goodwill to Udayana This news was brought by a merchant who announced that the king's envoy had already set out from Ujjayini

Udayana and Vasavadatta spent a few days as the guests of Pulindaka Their anxiety was over They were among friends and followers They breathed with delight the pure air of the Vindhya mountains And when Vasavadatta felt the need of diversion, Vasantaka regaled her with stories of strange events and beautiful things

Very soon the messenger from Ujjayini reached the Vindhya forest and delivered this message from King Chandamahasena 'My son, I do not blame you for carrying my daughter away I wanted to give Vasavadatta to you myself, but I abstained because, while you were a prisoner at Ujjayini, you would have taken the proposal in ill part Now I only ask you to wait for a little while so that the marriage of my daughter might be celebrated with due attention to ritual I am sending my son, Gopalaka, to your court He will make the arrangements on my behalf'

The king of Vatsa was now eager to return home He asked his host, Pulindaka, to await the arrival of Prince Gopalaka Then, seated on a gorgeous elephant with

Vasavadatta by his side, he set out for Kaushambi. The army followed him. The clatter of arms and the sound of horses' hoofs seemed to proclaim the glory of Udayana to high heaven. Indeed, when clouds of dust soared skyward, mighty Indra was disturbed. He thought the mountains of earth were invading his home.

Udayana and Vasavadatta spent a night in a country castle that belonged to Rumanvat. Then, to the great delight of his beloved subjects, the king entered the capital. The city of Kaushambi waited for him, bathed and resplendent, like a wife eager to welcome her husband after a long sojourn in far-off lands. Banners waved joyously and music filled the air. Lovely faces peered from the balconies of towering mansions, like golden lotuses blooming in the heavenly Ganga.

Vasavadatta's joy was complete when Gopalaka arrived. Tears dimmed her eyes as she looked at her brother. Next day, with due observance of prescribed ceremonies, Udayana received the hand of Vasavadatta, like a beautiful shoot newly budded on the creeper of love. As she walked round the sacrificial fire, smoke reddened her eyes. She was getting foretaste of the intoxication in store for her in her husband's chamber.

The treasury was filled with the jewels presented by kings of distant countries. Udayana conferred upon the assembled sovereigns distinctions appropriate to their status. Gopalaka and Pulindaka were invested with turbans of honour. The faithful counsellors, Yaugandharayana, Rumanvat and Vasantaka, received the reward which they deemed of greater value than wealth or honour—the affection and gratitude of their royal friend.

And so King Udayana, after many tribulations, was united with the adorable Vasavadatta, with whom he trod the path of happiness for a long, long time.

Labdhadatta and the Power of Karma

IN the city of Lakshapura there once reigned a king named Lakshadatta. Never was a more generous monarch heard of. When a suppliant merely came and stood in his presence, he received a hundred thousand coins. But if he actually conversed with the king, he received five hundred thousand. In fact it was just because he never gave less than a lakh of coins that he was called Lakshadatta.

And yet, strange to relate, there was a certain poor man named Labdhadatta who never received a single copper from the king, although he always remained at the palace gate. Poor Labdhadatta wore only a ragged loin-cloth. He had matted hair, undernourishment had made him emaciated, and he did not possess a thing in the world. Day and night, in cold and in heat, in rainy weather and in dry weather he always remained at the gate, looking the very picture of misery. But the king never felt the desire to pull him out of poverty. And this was so because Labdhadatta's luck had not yet turned. The effects of his actions in past lives pursued him. Living so close to the most generous king on earth, he remained untouched by royal charity.

One day the king went on a hunt and Labdhadatta followed him, armed only with a stick. While the king, seated on a mighty elephant, killed tigers and bears with arrows, Labdhadatta played havoc among the wild beasts with his stick and despatched many of them. The king saw his courage and admired him, but gave him nothing. When the hunt was over, the king returned to his palace and resumed his diversions, while poor Labdhadatta stood at the gate as before.

On another occasion King Lakshadatta fell out with a neighbouring ruler. In the battle that followed Labdhadatta again displayed superhuman courage. Alone, and on foot,

he struck down enemy after enemy with his wooden staff. The king watched his valour from his royal chariot and admired him. But he did not feel impelled to reward him with a single coin. When the dust of battle had settled they both returned to the city—the king to his luxurious chamber, and Labdhadatta to his wonted place outside the gate.

In this way five years came and went. Life in the palace went on as before, and Labdhadatta remained outside the gate growing thinner and looking more wretched every day. At last one day King Lakshadatta happened to see him and felt pity. 'This poor man has long remained miserable outside my palace', he reflected. 'But I have never felt impelled to give him anything. This must be the result of his past deeds. Now let me find out whether fortune is ready to smile upon him.'

So the next day King Lakshadatta picked out some of the costly jewels from his treasury and placed them inside a melon that had been hollowed out. Then he summoned Labdhadatta and, in the presence of all his courtiers and ministers, said to him: "My dear fellow, I often see you outside my palace gate. Why don't you recite some poem for me?" Labdhadatta promptly recited a couplet which he had composed. The purport of the lines was this: 'As the rivers replenish the sea, so do the streams of fortune replenish a man already rich. But they never come within the range of a poor man's eyes.'

The king praised the couplet very highly and with great ceremony presented the melon to Labdhadatta. At this all the courtiers were surprised. "Who can fathom the ways of destiny?", they whispered. "Here is a man with whom the king is pleased, and all that he gets is a melon. Indeed, for an unlucky person even the wishing-tree of paradise becomes a fig tree."

Labdhadatta went out in a state of dejection. He happened to come across a mendicant who took a fancy to the fresh melon in his hand and obtained it from him in exchange for a garment. Labdhadatta sold the garment

and with the few coins that it fetched had a reasonably satisfying meal. On the next day he was back at his old place outside the palace. Meanwhile the mendicant went inside the palace and presented the fruit to the king. The king asked him, "Sir, where did you get this melon?" And the mendicant said, "Your Majesty, I got it from a man who habitually sits outside your palace." When King Lakshadatta heard this he was convinced that Labdhadatta's fortune had not yet turned.

The next day the poor man was summoned again. He recited the same couplet and the king again gave him the same melon, with great show of admiration. Without seeing what was inside the fruit, Labdhadatta gave it away to an official, and the official, in this turn, offered it to the king. On the third day Labdhadatta was again given the same fruit. This time he handed it over to one of the king's concubines who restored it to the king.

On the fourth day, however, when Labdhadatta was again made to recite his couplet, and was given the melon as a gift, the joining with which the fruit had been kept together broke. The jewels rolled out and the entire chamber was illuminated by their lustre. The courtiers whispered, "Ah, how erroneous was our impression. We did not know the real situation and thought that the king was being ungracious." And King Lakshadatta addressed them in these words: "Gentlemen, you have seen how powerful is the effect of *karma*. By this artifice I merely wanted to find out whether fortune intended to lift this man out of poverty. As you all saw, although I gave him a veritable treasure he was not destined to enjoy it. Only today has the effect of his actions in past lives come to an end. And so his luck has turned."

With these words the king loaded Labdhadatta with additional gifts and settled on him the revenue of a hundred villages.

How Lohajangha Fooled the Bawd

IN the city of Mathura there once lived a courtesan named Rupinika. She was skilled in music and dance, and the fame of her beauty had spread far and wide. One day, on her way to the temple of Vishnu, she saw a Brahmin youth called Lohajangha. His handsome appearance won her heart at once. That very evening she sent her maid with a message imploring the youth to visit her.

"There must be some mistake", said the youth. "Your mistress could not have sent for *me*. I have no wealth to lavish upon her."

"Sir", said the maid, "my mistress seeks no money from you. She begs of you to visit her because she esteems you highly."

Lohajangha visited her house and Rupinika greeted him with the utmost affection. By and by a great love sprang up between them and the young man settled down in her house.

Now Rupinika's mother, Makaradanshtra, was a heartless old bawd. She cared for nothing but money, and was exceedingly annoyed to see that her daughter was disregarding her lessons. "What has come over you, Rupinika?", she said, "Surely this is not the way a courtesan should behave. The moment a member of our profession falls in love, fortune deserts her. Do not run yourself for the sake of this beggar."

But Rupinika would not listen to her advice. She declared that she loved Lohajangha more than all the wealth in the world. Her mother was not to be thwarted so easily. She approached a young man, one of Rupinika's former lovers, and related the whole story. She extracted from him a promise to drive Lohajangha out of the house. Choosing a moment when Rupinika was in the temple, the young man came with his retainers and caught hold of Lohajangha.

They belaboured him without mercy and, carrying him outside the city, threw him in a ditch. When Rupinika returned, and heard what had happened in her absence, she was overwhelmed with grief. But there was nothing that she could do for her beloved.

Lohajangha somehow extricated himself from the ditch and set out on a pilgrimage. After traversing many miles in the heat of the sun he felt utterly exhausted. There was no tree in the vicinity to offer him shade. Just then, he discovered the carcass of an elephant which had been hollowed out by jackals. Unable to bear the heat any longer Lohajangha crept into the carcass and, through sheer fatigue, fell asleep. At night dark clouds gathered and there was a sharp shower. The rain made the elephant's skin contract and Lohajangha was sealed up. It rained so heavily that the carcass was swept into the river and eventually reached the sea. A mighty eagle picked it up and carried it to the island of Lanka on the other side of the sea. The eagle tore open the carcass with its claws and, discovering that there was a man inside it, flew away in panic.

Lohajangha came out through the aperture made by the eagle. He was astonished to find himself on the other side of the sea and was wondering what he should do when he saw two *Rakshasas*. Now, ever since Lord Ramachandra had defeated Ravana, all the *Rakshasas* of Lanka were mighty afraid of human beings. So the two who had seen Lohajangha immediately returned to their city and reported the matter to their king, Vibhishana. The king sent his men to escort Lohajangha to his palace. And so, after all these extraordinary adventures, the poor Brahmin youth of Mathura found himself in the splendid golden palace of the king of Lanka.

Vibhishana asked him how he had managed to cross the sea and Lohajangha concocted a story on the spot. He said, "Through prolonged religious penance, I won the favour of Vishnu himself. The mighty god came to me in a dream and said 'Young man, I am pleased with you. Go to Lanka and King Vibhishana will give you wealth.' I

protested that it was not in my power to reach Lanka without any resources. At this Vishnu reassured me and said: 'Don't worry, I shall transport you there.' And as soon as I woke up I found myself on the other side of the sea."

Vibhishana believed the story, since there was no other way of accounting for the young man's presence on the island. Lohajangha was made much of and assigned a palace to live in. Vibhishana's soldiers captured a young eagle and broke him in, so that Lohajangha could have joyrides in the sky whenever he felt the need of diversion.

Lohajangha stayed in Lanka for a while and then longed to return home. King Vibhishana presented him with many valuable jewels and, out of his devotion to Vishnu, also gave him the four emblems of that God—a discus, a club, a conchshell and a lotus. "My dear Lohajangha," he said, "please offer up these humble gifts at the temple of Vishnu when you reach Mathura. Farewell, and may happiness attend you!"

Lohajangha mounted his eagle, flew across the sea and arrived at Mathura. He descended at a secluded spot outside the city and deposited his treasure there. He tied up his bird to a tree as though it were a horse. In the market-place of Mathura he exchanged one of his jewels for several pieces of gold. He ate a hearty meal, and dressed himself in rich clothes. Bathed and perfumed, he mounted his bird again and went to the house of Rupinika, carrying with him the emblems of Vishnu. Hovering about the terrace for a while, Lohajangha made a low sound to attract the attention of his beloved, and finally descended on the house. "I am Narayana," he said in a solemn tone, "The fame of your beauty has reached me and I have come to enjoy your favours."

Rupinika went down on her knees before him and conducted him to her private apartment. After remaining with her for some time Lohajangha spurred his eagle and hurried away. In the morning Rupinika did not speak to any one in her usual manner. Her mother repeatedly asked



ohajangha Fooled
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what was wrong with her Rupinika declared "I have become the wife of Vishnu himself and I must not converse with ordinary people." At first Makaradanshtra ridiculed her but that very night Rupinika convinced her of the truth of her story. Concealed behind a curtain, she saw Lohajangha descending from the sky, equipped with all the emblems of Vishnu. From that moment she began to flatter her daughter and asked her to plead with Vishnu on her behalf. "You must persuade your divine husband to take me to paradise," she said.

When Rupinika made this request on behalf of her mother the next evening, Lohajangha said, "Your mother is a worthless bawd I cannot take her to paradise openly. After all, I have to maintain my prestige among the other gods. But on the eleventh day of every month the door of heaven is opened to admit some strange beings. Among them I shall introduce your mother. But she shall have to change her appearance. You must shave her with a razor, keeping only five tufts of hair on her head. Then, stripping her, you must paint one side of her body red and the other black. Finally, put a necklace of skulls round her neck and bring her to me. I shall manage to take her to paradise."

Rupinika carried out his instructions. Lohajangha, impersonating Vishnu, seated his 'mother-in-law' on his eagle and flew into the air. He approached a lofty pillar in front of a temple, and put her down on the top of the pillar, leaving his club with her so that she could lean upon it and keep herself from falling. Then he left her, saying 'You must remain here while I go and shower my blessings upon the world of mortals.' After a few hours a large crowd gathered near the temple in a religious procession. Lohajangha spoke to them from the air. "Listen carefully, Oh people of Mathura", he said. "The Goddess of Pestilence is about to fall upon you. You must pray to Vishnu for protection." The people were frightened and started saying their prayers to ward off the calamity.

Makaradanshtra, balanced precariously on the pillar,

cried out, "Save me, I am falling " The crowd, taking her to be the Goddess of Pestilence, exclaimed, "Oh Goddess, have mercy Please do not fall upon us " And they spent the night in a state of deep fear and anxiety

In the morning, when the sun lighted up the horizon, the crowd discovered that it was no goddess but the infamous bawd Makaradanshtra who was perched on the pillar They summoned the king who came and joined in their laughter and mirth For a long time the bawd was thus exposed to the gaze of a jeering crowd At last Rupinika arrived and somehow managed to rescue her

The king, thinking that only a person with extraordinary powers could have brought about such a situation, made a proclamation that the man who had fooled the bawd should show himself and receive a robe of honour Lohajangha revealed himself and related the entire story He offered up at the temple of Vishnu the four emblems given by Vibhishana The king was astonished and the people lavished their praise upon Lohajangha Rupinika was freed from her temple duties, and Lohajangha, having revenged himself upon Makaradanshtra, began to live happily with his beloved The jewels that he had brought from Lanka ensured his lifelong opulence He became one of the richest men in Mathura and the king gave him a high position at the court

Glossary

- Agni* (i) Fire, particularly altar-fire, (ii) A Vedic deity regarded as guardian of the sacred rites associated with fire
- Amrita* (i) Immortality, (ii) The nectar that bestows immortality
- Ananda* (i) Bliss, (ii) Name of the Buddha's closest disciple
- Apsaras* A celestial nymph
- Ashrama* A hermitage
- Asoka* Literally, 'free from sorrow' (i) A much-prized Indian tree (*Saraca indica*) bearing bright, red flowers, (ii) Name of the famous emperor who ruled from 273 B C to 236 B C and was a great patron of Buddhism
- Bel* A tree (*Aegle marmelos*) which yields a large fruit of medicinal value
- Bhil* Member of a much-dreaded savage tribe
- Bodhisattva* Literally, 'He whose essence is Enlightenment' The Buddha in one of his past or future incarnations
- Brahma* First of the Divine Triad (Brahma-Vishnu-Siva) The supreme deity in the aspect of Creator
- Brahman* The Impersonal Absolute of monistic metaphysics
- Brahmin* (i) A member of the highest caste, (ii) A priest
- Buddhas* (i) Enlightened beings, (ii) Liberated beings in Buddhist mythology
- The Buddha* The historical person, Shakyamuni Gautama, who founded the Buddhist faith (See also 'Enlightened One')
- Chakravaka* A bird which figures prominently in Sanskrit poetry, probably the shelldrake
- Chanakya* The author of the *Arthashastra*, the famous treatise on Political Economy and Diplomacy (See also Kautilya)
- Chandala* A man of the lowest and most despised stratum of society

Chataka . A bird who is said to subsist only on the first drops of rain every year, for which he patiently endures thirst for the remainder of the year

Chitrakūṭa The recorder of human actions in Yama's realm (See also Yama)

Devadatta The Buddha's wicked cousin, whose jealousy and hostility pursued him in all his incarnations

Dhāk Also known as *Palasha*, a tree with showy red flowers (*Butea frondosa* or 'Flame of the Forest')

Durga A goddess, usually represented as terror-inspiring, associated with esoteric rites

'*Enlightened One*' One of the epithets applied to the Buddha

Gandharva Member of a celestial race of musicians

Garuda (i) King of the birds , (ii) A fabulous bird serving as the vehicle of Vishnu

'*Great Being*' One of the epithets frequently applied to the Bodhisattva.

Guru Literally, 'weighty' or 'great' A revered teacher or elder relative.

Harischandra A legendary king, famed for his unswerving devotion to truth

Indra (i) King of the gods (ii) The god of rain (See also Vasava)

Jain A follower of the heterodox religion founded by Mahavira

Jamādagni Name of a famous *rishi*

Jambu Popular name *jamun* The rose-apple tree

Jataka Literally, 'Nativity' A story usually didactic, connected with one of the Buddha's former births

Jetaiana A large park so called because it was purchased from Prince Jeta by a lay disciple, where the Buddha often spent several weeks at a stretch

Kailasa A peak in the Himalayas, supposed to be the home of Siva

- Karma* (i) One's deeds or actions performed in lives past and present, (ii) One's inexorable destiny as determined by one's actions
- Kartika* A month corresponding roughly to October-November
- Kartikeya* The God of War, also known as Skanda
- Kashi* Traditional name for the city of Banaras (See also Varanasi)
- Kautilya* Another name of Chanakya (See also Chanakya)
- Kaveri* A well-known river in the extreme south of India
- Khajuraho* Site of the renowned eleventh century temples with rich carvings
- Kinnara* Member of a race of mythical beings usually regarded as half-animal and half-human
- Kosala* Name of a region in northern India, once an important kingdom
- Kshatriya* A member of the warrior caste
- Kubera* The God of Riches
- Lakshmi* Wife of Vishnu, worshipped as the goddess of prosperity
- Lanka* Another name of Simhala (Ceylon) Sometimes the word Lanka indicates only the capital city of Ceylon (See also Simhala)
- Magadha* Name of a kingdom in eastern India, at one time a great centre of political power and a seat of culture
- Mahout* Elephant-driver
- Mama* A small, black bird of the passerine order, noted for its capacity to imitate human speech
- Meru* A fabulous golden mountain around which the planets are supposed to revolve
- Mimamsa* An orthodox system of philosophy closely adhering to scriptural texts
- Moggallana* One of the favourite disciples of the Buddha
- Naga* (i) A snake, (ii) A legendary being with human face and serpentine body
- Narayana* A name of Vishnu (See also Vishnu)
- Nyaya* (i) Justice, rectitude, propriety, (ii) An orthodox system of philosophy mainly concerned with logic
- Ocean-churning* The reference is to the myth according to which the gods and the demons churned the primeval ocean of milk with Mount Meru as the churning rod and the snake, Vasuki as

the rope The Ocean-churning is supposed to have yielded a number of precious objects, the last of which was a jar of nectar (*See* also *Parijata*, *Vasuki*)

Pali A language, closely allied to Sanskrit, in which the canonical literature of Buddhism is preserved

Panchatantra Literally, 'Five Underlying Principles' or 'Five Doctrines'

Pandavas Heroes of the *Mahabharata* war, representing 'the Good' while Kauravas represented 'the Evil'

Parijata One of the mythical trees yielded up during Ocean-churning (*See* also Ocean-churning)

Parvati Daughter of the Himalayas and consort of Siva

Pataliputra The capital city of Magadha, associated with the names of many great emperors

Pisacha A demon or ghoul

Prajapati (i) Lord of all living creatures , (ii) A Vedic god at one time regarded as supreme

Pulinda Member of a wild mountain tribe

Rakshasa A nocturnal fiend

Rama or Ramachandra Prince of Ayodhya, hero of the epic poem *Ramayana*

Ravana The demon king of Lanka who was the adversary of Rama in the war described in the *Ramayana* (*See* also *Vibhishana*)

Rishi A sage, a seer

Sal A large tree (*Shorea robusta*) frequently mentioned in Buddhist literature

Sarasvati (i) Name of a sacred river , (ii) Goddess of Speech, Learning and the Muses

Sariputta A favourite disciple of the Buddha

Savatthi or Sravasti A town where the Buddha delivered some of his most important sermons

Shabara Member of a wild tribe inhabiting the foothills

Shashtra Scripture, canonical work

Shravana A month, corresponding to July-August, marked by heavy rainfall

Shudra A member of the menial caste

Simhala Another name for Ceylon (*See* also *Lanka*)

Sua (i) Gracious, good, auspicious , (ii) Third in the Divine Triad

- (Brahma-Vishnu-Siva), sometimes also worshipped as the Supreme Being
- Stupa* A mound or other structure built over the relics of the Buddha or other leaders of the Buddhist church
- Takshashila* A city in north-western India, once a great centre of learning
- Tamala* A tree (*Cinnamomum tamala*) with large, fragrant leaves
- Tathagata* Literally, 'He who has thus arrived' A title of the Buddha
- Tilottama* Name of a heavenly nymph
- Varshya* A member of the trading community
- Varanasi* The ancient name of Banaras In recent years the name has been revived (*See also* Kashi)
- Varuna* A Vedic god, the presiding deity of the Night, the West, and the Waters, often associated with Indra
- Vasava* A name of Indra (*See also* Indra)
- Vasuki* (i) Sovereign of the serpents, (ii) The mythical serpent used as a rope in Ocean-churning (*See also* Ocean-churning)
- Veena* The lute
- Vibhishana* The brother of Ravana, installed on the throne of Lanka by Ramachandra
- Vidarbha* A region south of the Vindhya mountain, once a prosperous kingdom
- Vidyadhara* Member of a tribe of celestial beings possessing knowledge of magical spells The Vidyadharas are supposed to be attendants of Siva
- Vindhya* A mountain range running from east to west and roughly separating northern India from the Deccan
- Vishnu* Second of the Divine Triad (Brahma-Vishnu-Siva), the husband of Lakshmi, the Supreme Being in the aspect of Preserver
- Vyas* Name of a great sage, the author of 'the *Mahabharata*

Yajnavalkya Name of a well-known sage and philosopher

Yaksha Member of a class of demigods in the service of Kubera the God of Wealth

Yama (i) The God of Death, (ii) The Lord of the Nether Regions (iii) The Supreme Punisher (*See also* Chitragupta)